FRIDAY
May 24, 2024

BENGALURU
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Eight killed in boiler blast near Mumbai

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FINAL BECKONS

Sunrisers clash with Royals in Qualifier 2

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NEARBY

Return home or face family ire: HDD to Prajwal

BENGALURU
Former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on Thursday warned his grandson and Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, saying he should return home and surrender to the police, or face his anger and that of all family members. » Page 6

Only 19% of vehicles in State have HSRP

BENGALURU
Despite multiple deadlines issued by the Transport Department, only 19% of vehicles in Karnataka registered before April 1, 2019, have installed High-Security Registration Plates. » Page 2

METROPLUS » PAGE 5

Karnataka renews call to cancel Prajwal's passport

External Affairs Ministry processing request after Siddaramaiah writes a second letter to Modi to take action to bring back the Hassan MP, who is facing several allegations of sexual abuse

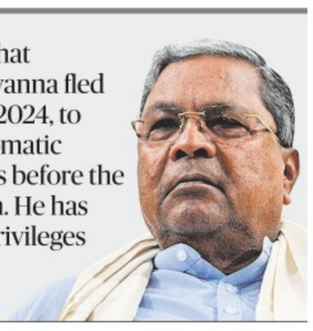
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is processing a request from the Karnataka government to cancel the diplomatic passport of absconding Janata Dal(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who faces several allegations of sexual abuse, an official source said on Thursday.

Mr. Prajwal, 33, is the grandson of JD(S) supremo and former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda. He is believed to have been in Europe since April 27.

"MEA has received a letter from the Karnataka government for cancellation of diplomatic passport in respect of MP Prajwal Revanna. This is being processed," the source said.

> It is shameful that Mr. Prajwal Revanna fled the country on April 27, 2024, to Germany using his diplomatic passport just a few hours before the FIR was filed against him. He has abused his diplomatic privileges
> **SIDDARAMAIAH**
> Karnataka Chief Minister



The confirmation was communicated to *The Hindu* after Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah wrote a second letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking the cancellation of the passport of the Hassan MP to ensure his return to India so that the law can take its course.

In the letter dated May 22, Mr. Siddaramaiah said that Mr. Prajwal had been accused of being involved in "a grave series of incidents".

Besides seeking the cancellation of the diplomatic passport, the Chief Minister urged Mr. Modi to "take prompt and concerted actions to secure Mr. Prajwal's return to India".

"It is shameful that Mr. Prajwal Revanna, MP of Hassan, who is also the candidate from the JD(S) in the constituency in the 2024 general elections and the grandson of former Prime Minister, fled the country on April 27, 2024, to Germany using his diplomatic passport bearing the number D1135500 shortly after news of his heinous action emerged and just a few hours before the FIR was filed against him. He has abused his diplomatic privileges to flee the country and to escape criminal proceedings," Mr. Siddaramaiah said.

"The accused Mr. Prajwal has managed to remain in hiding to this day despite the issue of a Look Out Circular, a Blue Corner Notice and two notices by the Investigating officer under Section 41A CrPC," he said.

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'THE COLOSSAL FAILURE'
» PAGE 10

Violence erupts in Bengal over death of BJP supporter

Poll flashpoint: Security personnel deployed in Nandigram on Thursday following the death of a BJP supporter. ANI

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Two days ahead of the sixth phase of polling in the Lok Sabha election, a woman supporter of the BJP was killed in Nandigram of West Bengal, resulting in large-scale protests on Thursday in the region that will be voting on Saturday.

Rathibala Arhi was killed by unidentified persons late on Wednesday and her son – a local leader of the Scheduled Caste morcha of the BJP – sustained grievous injuries.

Violence erupted on Thursday morning at Sonachura village in Nandigram in protest against the incident. BJP workers set several houses on fire and attacked those belonging to Trinamool Congress supporters.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Farm suicides: CM wants a study done

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As total of 842 farmers ended their lives during 2023-24 in the State and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has directed Agriculture Department officials to conduct a study to identify the reasons behind it.

Mr. Siddaramaiah was informed about thee suicides during a videoconference with senior officials on Thursday, and that compensation had been credited to the accounts of families through DBT. As many as 90 petitions seeking relief had been rejected, while 62 cases were pending at the sub-divisional commissioners' level. Relief to their families would be provided after receiving forensic reports, officials said. The Chief Minister directed officials to clear bills related to drought relief once in 15 days.

ANOTHER REPORT ON
» PAGE 6

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Still I rise! Despite knockout exit, RCB showed spirit and chutzpah

After a string of losses, du Plessis' men tasted success in six consecutive games, including the Southern Derby against Super Kings, to storm into the playoffs for the ninth time

IPL-17

Tarun Shastry

EMMANUAL YOGINI

There is something unique and awe-inspiring about comeback stories and redemption arcs. More so in sport. These tales showcase grit, determination, resilience and a certain never-say-die spirit in the face of adversity that brings out the best in individuals and teams alike.

The story of Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL journey is no different. RCB has boasted of some of the world's most destructive batters and some of the best bowlers in the business across seasons. Despite that, this outfit has found itself at the receiving end of the unforgiving nature of the sport since the inception of the tournament in 2008.

RCB has had a shot at the ultimate prize, the coveted IPL trophy, three times but the championship crown has remained elusive.

Ahead of the 2024 season of the IPL, the franchise's triumph in the second edition of the Women's Premier League came as a shot in the arm for the outfit and its loyalists. That was a comeback story by itself. After faltering its way through the tournament, Smriti Mandhana and Co. gathered momentum in the final week to pull off one of the most enthralling resurgences in recent sporting folklore.

However, when it came to getting to work in the middle, the men's team got off to a start that was anything but positive. The loss to Chennai Super Kings in the season opener at Chepauk uncovered gaping holes in the side's bowling plans and batting middle-order.

With just one victory against Punjab Kings and six subsequent losses on the trot, an early exit looked imminent. Even the only plus – the imperious performances of senior players Virat Kohli, skipper Faf du Plessis and Dinesh Karthik – couldn't compensate.

Extraordinary comeback stories

History has borne witness many times when strife transforms a sporting outfit. Extraordinary comeback stories where teams have defied the odds to win championships. A standout example is Liverpool FC's UEFA Champions League final 'miracle' against AC Milan at Istanbul in 2005.

It was one of the riveting turnarounds in modern sport. With the Reds three goals behind and their backs to the wall at half time, a resurgence looked next to impossible, until Milan ran into Steven Gerrard, whose goal in the 54th minute of the second half ignited a memorable fightback. Liverpool managed to restore parity with the scoreline reading 3-3 when the full time whistle was blown. Rafael Benitez's side eventually won the game 3-2 on penalties.

Closer home, M.S. Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings also pulled off something similar when it lifted its third IPL crown in 2018 with a side infamously dubbed 'Dad's Army' due to the bulk of the players being in the higher end of the age spectrum. What followed was a masterclass in resource utilisation.

So there were plenty of precedents for RCB to draw inspiration from. With seven losses in its first eight games, RCB's place in the contest was hanging by the flimsiest of threads. Turns out, all that matters is that you hold on to what you have and doggedly rebuild.

"There is a 1% chance, and sometimes that chance is good enough," Kohli told his RCB teammates in a now viral social media video. "But what matters is what you think about that 1%. Are you willing to give absolutely everything that you have to make that 1 into 10 and then grow that 10 into 30? Eventually, something magical might come out of it."

Something magical did happen on May 18. As fate would have it, it was the same CSK RCB went up against in a must-win clash. All odds were stacked against Faf's boys.

Even the weather gods seemed to have turned their backs on the home team, with threats of rain (a washout guaranteeing CSK a playoff spot) looming large.

Eventually, it didn't rain, it poured! RCB hammered 16 sixes and 14 fours in a cohesive batting effort. The end result was a mammoth total of 218.

The pendulum of fortune swayed uneasily throughout the chase and the team which held its nerve eventually came out on top.

Individual redemption tales

There were small individual redemption tales too. Yash Dayal, who was part of Gujarat Titans last season, is often associated exclusively with the clobbering he was subjected to by Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh. Rinku hit five consecutive sixes in the last over when GT was defending 29 runs in the final over.

> There is a 1% chance, and sometimes that chance is good enough. But what matters is what you think about that 1%. Are you willing to give absolutely everything that you have to make that 1 into 10 and then grow that 10 into 30?
>
> VIRAT KOHLI

It was necessary to keep the demons of 2023 at bay. With a wet ball and arguably the best finisher on strike, Dayal's first delivery was a low full toss and it was smoked out of the ground by Dhoni.

When the universe is on your side, nothing can stop you. As Dinesh Karthik revealed during a talk in the dressing room after the match, that six became a blessing in disguise as a new ball was taken for the last five deliveries. Yash Dayal's back-of-the-hand slower one deceived Dhoni as he top-edged to the fielder at fine leg.

That paved the way for an astounding victory, with Dayal and Co. denying CSK a win by 27 runs and a spot in the playoffs by an even slimmer margin (courtesy NRR).

From a string of losses, RCB won six games on the trot to storm into the playoffs, its ninth appearance in the knockout bracket in IPL history.

Alas, the author of the fairytale decided to close his pen there. The chutzpah and luck that carried RCB thus far ran out against the Rajasthan Royals in the Eliminator on Wednesday. A comprehensive and superior showing with bat and ball helped RR earn another opportunity to make the summit clash with a four-wicket win with six balls left. It was not for a lack of trying. A late resurgence with the bat helped RCB plump a wilting batting effort to 172/8 at the end of 20 overs, easily 30-40 runs more than what was looking possible at one stage. Better efficiency with the ball and wickets earlier in the PowerPlay might have seen a different result being analysed, but it was not meant to be.

The loss notwithstanding, RCB's campaign will be remembered for a long time, as the side gave itself a fair shot at glory riding on the power of teamwork and a relentless hunger for victory. It's a hunger the women's side carried to the winner's podium and it's one that could see the men's outfit enjoy its day in the sun soon enough.

THE GIST

- With just one victory against PBKS and six straight defeats, an early exit looked imminent for RCB
- A dramatic turnaround saw the Bengaluru side claw its way back from the brink and enter the playoffs
- The May 18 shootout against CSK saw RCB come out all guns blazing

Gaffer Gasperini hails 'incredible' Atalanta history-makers

EUROPA LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
MILAN

Gian Piero Gasperini lavished praise on his "incredible" Atalanta players after they stunned Bayer Leverkusen to win the Europa League and claim their first ever continental honour.

Atalanta swept aside German champions Leverkusen 3-0 which was unbeaten in 51 games in all competitions before Wednesday night's final in Dublin.

The Italians won their first trophy in over six decades with a sensational display of attacking football capped by Ademola Lookman's hat-trick.

"It's an amazing feeling. The boys were incredible, the performance that they put in this evening was wonderful," said Gasperini to *Sky Sport*.

"You can't just defend in matches like this. We knew about this type of team that they're really good going forward but not so good if you force them to defend. It went well right from the beginning.

"More than anything else it's also about how we did it. We absolutely deserved to win. We're so happy because to win the Europa league is a huge achievement for us."

Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen was hot favourites to complete a treble by winning in Dublin and in the German Cup final on Saturday after romping to its first ever Bundesliga title without losing.

But Lookman made sure Atalanta would take the trophy back to Bergamo with a fabulous treble, each goal scored by the Nigeria forward improving on the previous strike.

"Very, very happy. Together we made history. It's incredible," said Lookman to *Sky*.

"The ambition of the club... last season we had a great season to qualify for the Europa League and this season we won a trophy. It's a fantastic effort from everybody. We're gonna celebrate tonight."

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Only 19% of vehicles in State have installed HSRP

Data reveals that only 38 lakh vehicles out of the two crore have installed these number plates

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

The current deadline for installing HSRP expires on May 31. FILE PHOTO

Despite multiple deadlines issued by the Transport Department, only 19% of vehicles in Karnataka registered before April 1, 2019, have installed High-Security Registration Plates (HSRP).

The current deadline for installing HSRP expires on May 31. However, vehicle owners can breathe a sigh of relief as the State government informed the High Court of Karnataka on May 21 that no precipitative action will be taken until June 12 regarding the installation of HSRP.

The Transport Department issued a notification in August 2023 mandating the installation of HSRP on an estimated two crore vehicles registered before April 1, 2019, setting a November 17, 2023, deadline. However, as very few people installed it, the department extended the deadline until February 17, 2024, and again until May 31, 2024, as the transition progress was sluggish.

Despite multiple deadlines, the Transport Department data reveals that only 38 lakh vehicles out of the two crore vehicles in the State have installed HSRP number plates. "Another 1.62 vehicles have not yet got the HSRP number plates. Out of the two crore vehicles in the State, 70% are two-wheelers, 20% are light motor vehicles, and 10% are state transport corporation vehicles," an official from the Transport Department said.

Meanwhile, the HSRP Manufacturers' Association of India had filed an appeal in the High Court of Karnataka challenging the government's notification allowing only vehicle manufacturers to fix HSRP for old vehicles would become infructuous if the government does not extend the deadline of May 31.

The association has been claiming that all the manufacturers of HSRP-possessing Type Approval Certificate granted by the authorities concerned should be allowed to fix HSRP to old vehicles while allowing fixation through vehicle manufacturer-selected HSRP manufacturers would favour "influential" HSRP manufacturers who have already tied up with the vehicle manufacturers and their dealers for supply of HSRP for new vehicles.

What is HSRP

The HSRP is a new type of tamper-proof number plate featuring non-reusable locks. Once installed, it can only be removed by breaking the lock, making it difficult to replace.

According to a Transport Department official, all HSRP plates will have a uniform font and design, with a blue 'Chakra' symbol on the left side. The plate's background colour varies based on the vehicle type; for instance, private vehicles have a white background with black numbers. Additionally, "INDIA" is hot-stamped on the number plate.

The HSRP includes a unique 10-digit number linked to the vehicle's chassis and engine numbers, stored in a centralized database. Cars have two such numbers, one for the front plate and one for the rear. A windshield sticker displays the vehicle's registration date, registration number, and the two HSRP identification numbers. For two-wheelers, a single 10-digit number is engraved on the rear plate, and no sticker or card is issued.

Many say the primary reason vehicle owners have not installed HSRP number plates is the lack of awareness and issues faced by vehicle owners while booking the number plates online. However, Transport Department officials say dedicated helplines have been established to address issues related to HSRP number plates. Officials also mentioned they are currently raising awareness and have posted frequently asked questions about HSRP on the department's website.

86 among 103 revellers at rave party test positive for drugs

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Investigations into the rave party raid case have revealed that a film artiste from the Telugu industry is among 86 people allegedly confirmed to have consumed drugs at the "Sunset to Sunrise Victory party" held on May 19 at the G.R. Farmhouse in Singena Agrahara village of Anekal taluk, said officials.

The Anti-Narcotic Wing of the Central Crime Branch (CCB), based on a tip-off, raided the farmhouse and detained as many as 103 people involved in the night-long party. The police later arrested five people and seized narcotics substances, including MDMA pills, cocaine and hydro ganja.

Officials alleged that the guests tried to mislead the police and threw the substances in dustbins, swimming pools and other places. However, the police roped in the sniffer squad to track down the drugs and subjected all the guests to a medical examination to ascertain traces of drugs in their bodies.

Medical report

The medical report confirmed the presence of drugs in 86 people, including the film artiste, and the CCB will summon the accused for further investigation, said officials. While 59 are male, 27 female guests tested positive, while the rest of them who were detained on the spot and took medical tests have tested negative for drug consumption.

The film artiste earlier tried to defend herself by posting a video clip on social media claiming that she was not part of the rave party and was staying in her hometown.

However, the medical test has now proven otherwise, and officials said she will now have to face legal action.

The CCB officials are now questioning them to ascertain the source of the drugs to track down the network further.

June 4 deadline for State govt. to decide BTC application seeking licence for horse racing

FROM THE COURT

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Thursday directed the State Government to take a decision on or before June 4 on the application filed by the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC) seeking a licence for horse racing fixtures of 2024-25.

A vacation bench of Justice M.G.S. Kamal issued the direction on three separate petitions filed by the BTC, the Karnataka Racehorse Owners' Association, and the Karnataka Trainers' Association.

The court set June 4 as the deadline after Advocate-General Shashi Kiran Shetty informed that the government is not in a position to grant temporary permission for the races scheduled for May 25 and 26, but would take a final decision on the applications within a reasonable period of about two weeks.

The court asked the government to hear the representatives of the BTC before taking the final decision while noticing that the government has been regularly grating licences for on-course and off-course betting for horse races at BTC for 72 years.

2-hour discussion

Pointing out that the competent authorities of the government discussed for two hours the court's May 21 query on whether temporary permission could be granted for May 25 and 26 races, the A-G said that there are certain crucial aspects that require elaborate consideration.

Hence, he requested reasonable time to take the final decision on application submitted by the BTC.

27 licences cancelled

Meanwhile, Senior Advocate Sriranga S., appearing for the BTC, told the court that the club, in its recent general body meeting, cancelled the licences of 27 tainted bookies against whom the police had recently filed charge sheets for allegedly evading crores of rupees in GST and collecting bet amounts illegally.

He also pointed out that the government is aware of the activities at the club as four members of the BTC's 10-member board are nominated by the State government, including the Secretary, Finance Department, and the Bengaluru City Police Commissioner in their ex-officio capacity.

As the decision of cancelling the licences of charge-sheeted-bookies by the BTC is a new development, the A-G said that this aspect would be placed before the competent authorities for consideration before taking the final decision on the application for grant of licence.

Due since April

The BTC had complained that its applications seeking licences for its racing fixtures for 2024-25 are pending before the government since April due which livelihood of several persons dependent on racing had been affected, besides causing loss to the State exchequer by way of GST.

The court adjourned hearing on the petitions to June 6.

Empty sites in residential areas can't be used for paid parking facility: HC

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The law does not permit the use of an empty plot/site in a residential area for parking vehicles on a commercial basis by collecting parking charges, said the High Court of Karnataka.

Within six weeks

Also, the court directed the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike to submit within six weeks a detailed project report on the methodology for implementing Parking Policy 2.0 after noticing that the

BBMP and the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) have not initiated a pilot permit system, etc., under the policy even though it came into force in December 2020.

Justice Suraj Govidaraj passed the order recently while allowing a petition filed by Nagabhushan Reddy N. and his brother, residents of 19th A Cross, 17th Main, HSR Layout Sector-3, Bengaluru.

The petitioners had questioned the use of plot number 7 on 19th A Cross, 17th Main, HSR Layout Sector-3 for parking two- and four-wheeler vehicles by the site's owner, Nagendra, on a commercial basis. The petitioners complained that the use of residential plots for commercial parking affected the residents due to vehicle movement and the conduct of drivers.

'Selective target'

The owner of plot number 7 pointed out that there are many other empty residential plots used as paid parking in the locality while alleging that the petitioners had selectively targeted him because the previous owner of the plot did not sell it to them.

Novel idea but ...

Though owners of some empty sites have come up with the novel idea of using their plots for parking and collecting charges, the use of plots in residential areas for paid parking is neither permitted in the building bye-laws nor the PP2.0, the court observed. Neither the law recognises granting of a trade licence nor the zonal regulations permit such use of residential plots, the court pointed out. The BBMP told the court that the area parking plan and parking charges framework are under preparation as per the PP 2.0, which also contains a concept of off-street parking in areas with high usage, such as commercial areas. However, the policy has no provision for allowing an empty residential plot to be used for paid parking.

Three Bengaluru hotels receive hoax bomb threat emails

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

After schools, museums, the airport and hospitals, three hotels in Bengaluru received threat emails in the wee hours of Thursday. The emails were later deemed as a hoax.

The emails, from a person who identified himself as "daudee jiwal", claiming to be the son of a senior IPS officer, were sent to the front desks of major star hotels, threatening that bombs had been planted there. The sender claimed that his father had colluded with Pakistan-based ISI and a Tamil Nadu-based political family to execute the blast, to divert the attention from the drug scandal in which the Tamil Nadu -based political family is involved.

The caller also suggested evacuation of the hotels by 2.30 p.m. on Thursday in the mail that was sent around 2.30 a.m. The sender also asked that Bomb Detection and Disposal Squads (BDDS) be deployed, while warning that some of the BDDS staff were under the "supervision of his father".

The police, following a complaint, carried out searches and concluded it as a hoax.

Heartbroken but diehard RCB fans pin hopes on next season's IPL

Debasmita Chowdhury
BENGALURU

RCB's Virat Kohli and RR's Rovmen Powell after the eliminator match at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) were narrowly defeated in an elimination match by Rajasthan Royals (RR), who clinched victory by four wickets at the end of a nail-biting contest. This win secured RR's spot in Qualifier 2, and ended RCB's journey in IPL 2024. The outcome has left RCB fans heartbroken, as another season concludes in disappointment and unfulfilled dreams.

Despite a poor start and being nearly out of playoff contention, RCB defied the odds to win six consecutive games.

This dramatic turnaround, reminiscent of RCB's seven-game winning streak in 2011, has become the standout narrative and comeback story of the 2024 season.

Dhruv Suvarna, a private firm employee, was never a big fan until RCB's win against CSK on May 18 made him realise that an RCB win was no longer an impossible dream. But the match on May 22 reminded him that history does repeat itself, for RCB at least.

Some fans had an unflattering view of RCB's performance and strategy.

"They showed good intent on the field, but intent is never enough unless it is supplemented with skill," said Rushil Mittal, a college student. "I am disappointed that the result didn't go our way, but not with the team. The boys punched above their weight to qualify from a situation where they had only one win in eight matches. Couldn't be more proud of the character, grit and determination displayed on the field, and can't wait to cheer for this amazing bunch once again in the coming year," said Palak Pansari, a college student and a Virat Kohli fan.

Fans and rivals took to social media to share memes and tweets of RCB's unforgettable loss. "*Mundina salaa cup namde*" (cup will be ours next time), fans said to express their faith and loyalty

College student Neha Krishna, a die-hard RCB fan who has been following IPL for many years, said, "The secret to my strength is getting my heart broken 17 times in a row."

Fans and rivals took to social media to share memes and tweets of RCB's unforgettable loss. "*Mundina salaa cup namde*" (cup will be ours next time), fans said to express their faith and loyalty to their team.

Two labourers killed in explosion

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Two labourers who were among three who had sustained severe burns in an explosion at a factory in Dabaspete industrial area on Tuesday succumbed. The deceased are Ashok Kumar, 49, from Bihar and Mukesh Kumar, 33, from Odisha. The injured Sushil Kumar is being treated in Victoria Hospital and is said to be out of danger. According to the police, the three persons were working near the furnace at the S.K. Steel factory when there was an explosion. They were severely injured and shifted to Victoria Hospital, where the two succumbed on Friday. The Dabaspete police have registered a case of death due to negligence against the management of the factory and issued notices to them to appear before them for questioning.

Three arrested for collecting fine from traffic violators

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The northeast cybercrime police arrested three persons, including an engineering graduate from West Bengal, who were posing as traffic police and collecting fine from violators.

The prime accused, Ranjan Kumar Purbey, worked for a private company for six months in Bengaluru. After losing his job, he returned to his hometown in West Bengal. He roped in his associates Ismail Ali and Subir, both of whom owned a cybercafe and photocopy shop in West Bengal.

They downloaded the ID card of a city-based head constable from social media.

He accessed the details of the violators and their contact details listed on the city traffic police mobile app and Transport Department website. Using the data, the accused, posing as the traffic police, called the violators to pay the dues on the UPI ID shared with them.

Based on a complaint filed by the daughter of a head constable whose ID was misused, the cybercrime police tracked down the accused in their hometown and arrested them on Thursday.

Timings
BENGALURU

FRIDAY, MAY. 24
RISE 05:53 SET 18:40
RISE 19:34 SET 06:10

SATURDAY, MAY. 25
RISE 05:53 SET 18:41
RISE 20:32 SET 07:03

SUNDAY, MAY. 26
RISE 05:53 SET 18:41
RISE 21:31 SET 08:01

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	32	24
Mysuru	32	23
Bengaluru	33	23

Bengaluru Today
30°C Morning will be pleasant Day will be slight warm and humid. Spell of moderate rain and thundershower to occur. Night also will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
31°C The weather eill be slight warm and humid. Night will comfortable. Chances of light rain and thundershower with gusty winds.

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THE HINDU
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The 'chilling cover-up' of the U.K.'s contaminated blood scandal

The Infectious Blood Inquiry led by former judge Brian Langstaff catalogues preventable failures by doctors and successive governments that led to decades of treatment disasters in the U.K. This was compounded by bureaucratic stonewalling. 'The disaster was not an accident,' said Langstaff in his report

Saumya Kalia

Fifty years on, an inquiry report has shed some light on a medical tragedy in the U.K. Between the 1970s and 1990s, more than 30,000 people were infected with HIV, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B after receiving contaminated blood and blood products imported from the U.S. – making it the "worst treatment disaster" in the history of Britain's state-funded National Health Service (NHS). "The disaster was not an accident," said Inquiry chair Sir Brian Langstaff while announcing the report. Those in authority – doctors, the blood services, and governments – committed the ultimate folly in healthcare and healing: they "did not put patient safety first".

The six-year-long inquiry is a dissection and diagnosis. It uncovers a coverup that was "more subtle, more pervasive, and more chilling in its implications" than an orchestrated conspiracy. It was undertaken "to save face and to save expense". The calamity was made more catastrophic by the "defensiveness of government…and its refusal over decades to hold a public inquiry."

"Affected individuals and families have been very stoic in their wait," says Kate Khair, a nurse and Director of Research at Haemnet. "Many now feel that the report gives them vindication."

The Infected Blood Inquiry

The public inquiry, the largest of its kind to be carried out in the U.K., was commissioned in 2017 to "examine the circumstances in which men, women, and children treated by National Health Services … were given infected blood and infected blood products" since 1970. The affected included two groups: those with haemophilia (and similar blood disorders), and people who received blood transfusions during surgeries and childbirth. Between the decades in question, at least 3,000 people have died due to receiving infected blood. The Haemophilia Society estimates another 680 people have died since the inquiry began. An infected person still dies every four days in the U.K., per one estimate. Deaths and infections linked to tainted blood were also recorded in Australia, Canada, China, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Portugal, and the U.S.

Haemophilia is a rare genetic condition where the blood does not clot properly. Up until the 1970s, treatment options included administering the frozen blood product cryoprecipitate. It carried a low risk of passing on an infection since it was formulated from a single blood donation, but cryo was hard to store and harder to administer to patients. Enter Factor VIII, a revolutionary 'wonder treatment' made

A protester outside Westminster, in central London, during the Infected Blood Inquiry final report. AFP

using concentrated pooled plasma from tens of thousands of donors. It was deemed to be a medical breakthrough. The caveat: Factor VIII had a high risk of infection. Even one blood sample, if infected with HIV or Hepatitis C, could contaminate the entire batch. Demand rose within the U.K., prompting the NHS to import supplies from the U.S. American blood products were often sourced from high-risk donors including prisoners, and drug addicts.

The infections were not fully understood and identified at the time: the agent for Hepatitis C was identified in 1988, and the first case of AIDS in the U.K. was recorded in 1981. Research as early as the 1940s shows transfusions or the use of plasma could transmit "serum hepatitis," which could be fatal or lead to long-term diseases such as liver failure and cancer. By the 1970s, researchers had identified the virus responsible for Hepatitis B and became aware of the risks. The 'unexplained Hepatitis', as Hepatitis C was understood then, was known to be responsible for "the majority of post-transfusion hepatitis cases and that just as Hepatitis B could have serious long-term consequences, so too might non-A non-B Hepatitis". The WHO warned in 1974 and 1975 against importing blood products from countries with high rates of hepatitis, such as the U.S.

By 1984, when HIV was identified as a cause, experts grew concerned that people receiving Factor VIII blood concentrate were at risk of HIV infection. Evidence was, however, discarded and authorities failed to switch to safer options, Sir Langstaff's review found.

Why was tainted blood used?

The inquiry revealed how contaminated blood plasma products imported from the U.S. were used to treat people with

> Those in authority committed the ultimate folly, they did not put patient safety first
>
> **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF**

haemophilia. In January 1982, leading expert Arthur Bloom wrote an infamous letter to haemophiliac centres, suggesting "the most clearcut way" of testing the infectivity of the new treatments was on patients previously unexposed to large-pool concentrates - including children. Sir Langstaff vivisects the events at Treolar's College in Hampshire, a specialist school for people with haemophilia. Children were used as "objects of research" and treated "unnecessarily with concentrates (especially commercial ones) rather than choosing safer treatments". A *BBC* investigation found that of the 122 pupils who attended Treloar's between 1974 and 1987, 75 died of HIV and hepatitis C infections.

The inquiry estimates that of the 4,000-6,000 people with bleeding disorders in the U.K., about 1,250 developed both HIV and Hepatitis C. Of them, 380 were children. Three-quarters of these individuals have died. Those who received blood transfusions during surgeries also went on to develop infections. The inquiry estimates that between 80 and 100 of them were infected with HIV, and about 27,000 with Hepatitis C. Reports showed the death toll rose among people infected with Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV for two decades, and by the 1990s, almost 3,000 people had died. On multiple occasions, government officials decided not to suspend the importation of commercially produced blood products. They insisted, repeatedly, that people received the best available treatment and that blood donations were tested when technology became available. "Both claims were untrue," the Inquiry found.

What did the report find?

The six-year-long inquiry reviewed evidence from the government, NHS, pharmaceutical companies, and national blood services. It also took into account over 4,000 oral and written statements from people and families affected; some 2,000 people were appointed as "core participants" who worked with the team to pose questions to an expert group. The picture that emerged showed people were "failed not once, but repeatedly". Patient safety was ignored; decision-making was "slow and protracted"; people's autonomy and privacy were neglected; clinical freedom was abused; governments and NHS officials were defensive; the lack of transparency and accountability amplified the injustice "to the people whose lives had been destroyed by infection".

At a medical level, the opportunities to reduce risk were missed and new risks were created. There was a failure to achieve self-sufficiency in blood clot treatments in England and Wales; a failure to introduce surrogate screening for either HIV or Hepatitis C; delays in introducing screening for HIV and Hepatitis C despite mounting evidence. Doctors, haemophilia centres, pharma companies were guilty of "giving too many transfusions when they were not clinically needed, or when less would have sufficed, or overriding a patient's wish not to be transfused".

What next?

Mr. Langstaff has given the government a year to respond to its findings, noting that the inquiry is far from over. Its recommendations include immediate compensation, public memorials and for the learning to seep into medicine, government and civil services so that the tragedy is never repeated. Blood products should only be used when necessary, and should be regularly screened for known viruses. "We need to be sure that the products we use now are as safe as they can be", Dr. Khair adds.

Chief among the Infected Blood Inquiry's recommendations is to create an enabling environment where the "patient voice is heard". Dr. Khair concurs. "We have to engage with and listen to patient opinions and concerns and act upon them," she says. "We can, and should, learn from this – all care that we give needs to be assessed".

(saumya.k@thehindu.co.in)

THE GIST

The inquiry uncovered a coverup that was undertaken 'to save face and to save expense'. The calamity was made more catastrophic by the 'defensiveness of government…and its refusal over decades to hold a public inquiry'.

Between the decades in question at least 3,000 people died due to infected blood. The Haemophilia Society estimates 680 people have died since the inquiry began. An infected person still dies every four days in the U.K., per one estimate

People were failed repeatedly. Patient safety was ignored; decision-making was slow; autonomy and privacy were neglected; clinical freedom was abused; lack of transparency and accountability amplified the injustice to victims

BIG SHOT

'Mad honey' (komar honey in Turkish) is displayed in a shop in Cayeli, in the Turkish province of Rize. The lush green Pontic Alps are home to a subspecies of rhododendron whose purple flowers contain a hallucinogenic neurotoxin with which bees make 'mad honey'. Its fans swear it can cure heart palpitations, dodgy stomachs, and even impotence. Yet every year, hundreds of people end up in hospitals after gorging themselves on the substance. AFP

At the upcoming World Health Assembly, a toolkit to prepare nations for pandemics

Ramya Kannan

When the World Health Assembly (WHA) meets next week, it will create a historic milestone for global public health. A package of amendments, based on 300 proposals made by member countries after the pandemic, will be the star of the agenda. These amendments to the International Health Regulations will target improving the ability of countries to respond to public health emergencies of international concern.

The International Health Regulations (IHR), first adopted by the WHA in 1969 and last revised in 2005, were conceived to maximise collective efforts to manage public health events while minimising disruption to travel and trade. There are 196 State Parties to the IHR, comprising all 194 WHO Member States plus Liechtenstein and the Holy See. The IHR provides an overarching legal framework that defines countries' rights and obligations in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders. They also introduce important safeguards to protect the rights of travellers and other persons in relation to the treatment of personal data, in-

Lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. GETTY IMAGES

formed consent and non-discrimination in the application of health measures under the Regulations. Therefore, the IHR is an instrument of international law that is legally binding on 196 countries.

Surveillance systems

The IHR requires that all countries have surveillance systems capable of detecting acute public health events in a timely manner, assessing these events, reporting to the WHO those that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern, and responding to public health risks and emergencies. The goal of country implementation is to limit the spread of health risks to neighbouring countries and to prevent unwarranted travel and trade restrictions.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said: "The IHR has served for 20 years, but our experience in using this vital tool for the management of multiple public health emergencies, including COVID-19, has demonstrated important areas in which they could be strengthened."

Of the amendments, he added: "This is historic. Countries have come together around improved international mechanisms to protect every person in the world and future generations from the impact of epidemics and pandemics."

IHR Working Group co-chair Ashley Bloomfield hoped the amendments woul hold out. "It has been a long process to achieve consensus on the majority of amendments. This shows the importance the world places on being able to prepare effectively for and respond better to epidemic and pandemic threats, and that there is strong international consensus on how to go about international public health protection." This process has been running in parallel with an intergovernmental process to develop an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. The draft pandemic agreement, with its own Member State-led negotiating process, is also due to go to the World Health Assembly.

Building capacities

A potential new pandemic agreement and the amended IHRs would be complementary to international instruments designed and negotiated by Member States to help countries protect their peoples better from future pandemic threats. The IHR focuses on building countries' capacities to detect and respond to public health events, which could take on international dimensions, while the draft pandemic accord focuses on a coordinated international response to pandemics, with equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics at the centre.

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of Lok Sabha candidates above the age of 80

11 According to an analysis of election data gathered by the Association for Democratic Reforms, 537 candidates in the 25-30 age range are contesting the Lok Sabha elections. PTI

Amount of fine slapped by EU on Mondelez

337.5 in million euro. The EU fined the firm Mondelez "because they have been restricting the cross border trade of chocolate, biscuits and coffee products within the EU." AFP

Number of mobile connections directed to be re-verified

6.8 in lakh. The Department of Telecom has directed to carry out re-verification of mobile connections suspected to have been obtained using invalid or fake Proof of Identity within 60 days. PTI

Worth of artillery to be sent to Ukraine by the U.S.

275 in $ million. The U.S. is expected to announce additional military aid for Ukraine as Kyiv struggles to hold off advances by Russian troops in the Kharkiv region, two U.S. officials informed. AP

IndiGo airline's profit doubled in 2024 March quarter

1,895 in ₹ crore. For the March quarter, IndiGo said its passenger ticket revenues rose 25.5% to Rs 15,600.9 crore. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Rising debt strains household savings

Household net financial savings to GDP ratio have declined due to increased borrowing and structural shifts rather than a mere change in savings pattern; there's a need for macroeconomic policies to support household income growth to reduce its own financial stress and stabilise the macroeconomy

ECONOMIC NOTES

Zico Dasgupta
Srinivas Raghavendra

The bone of contention in the recent debate has been the drastic fall in household net financial savings to GDP ratio during 2022-23 on account of a higher borrowing to GDP ratio. In response to our previous article 'On the Fall in Household Savings' (*The Hindu*, April 21, 2024), the Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) to the Government of India has interpreted this trend as a mere shift in the composition of household savings, where households are argued to incur greater borrowing (or reduce net financial savings) solely to finance higher physical savings (investment). In this article, we argue that this interpretation is inconsistent with broad trends and highlight some signs of structural shifts in the Indian economy.

THE GIST

- The household net financial savings to GDP ratio fell significantly in 2022-23, primarily due to a higher borrowing to GDP ratio. This decline cannot be solely explained by a shift in the composition of savings.
- The increase in household borrowing has led to a higher debt-income ratio, resulting in greater interest payment burdens. This trend has been particularly pronounced in the post-COVID period.
- Unlike previous periods of high household borrowing, the current period is characterised by a lower nominal income growth rate compared to the average lending rate, leading to increased financial stress on households.
- There is a need for macroeconomic policies that not only address inflation and government debt targets but also stimulate and support household income growth to mitigate these emerging challenges.

Not a mere change in savings pattern

The household savings to GDP ratio is the sum of its net financial savings to GDP ratio, physical savings to GDP ratio and gold and, ornaments. A mere shift in the composition of savings would have kept the overall household savings to GDP ratio unchanged, with lower net financial savings to GDP ratio or higher borrowing to GDP ratio being fully offset by higher physical savings to GDP ratio. Figure 1 shows the extent to which these ratios changed during 2022-23 as compared to 2021-22 and indicates a contrary phenomenon.

The net financial savings to GDP ratio declined by 2.5 percentage points, whereas the physical savings to GDP ratio increased only by 0.3 percentage points. The household borrowing to GDP ratio increased by 2 percentage points, significantly more than the increase in the physical savings to GDP ratio. With the gold savings to GDP ratio remaining largely unchanged, the household savings to GDP ratio declined by 1.7 percentage points. In short, the phenomenon of a household's higher borrowing to GDP ratio cannot be explained exclusively in terms of change in savings composition. In our last article, we argued that lower net financial savings to GDP ratio and higher borrowing to GDP ratio largely reflected a household's need to finance greater interest payment commitments at a given income amid higher interest rates and debt-income ratio, leading to an increase in financial distress of the household.

Surprisingly, the CEA's response is based on the analysis of absolute nominal numbers of household total savings. He argues that the nominal value of a household's total savings has increased, as the nominal value of physical savings has increased more than the fall in nominal value of net financial savings. However, this trend merely shows that the nominal (inflation unadjusted) growth rate of total household savings has been positive during 2022-23, which has hardly been a topic of contention. A positive nominal growth rate of savings neither addresses the historic fall in net-financial savings to GDP ratio nor refutes our explanation of the higher borrowing to GDP ratio and the phenomenon of greater interest payment burden of the household that we pointed out.

The phenomenon of household's higher interest payment burdens and debt-income ratio in the post-COVID period, however, brings forth two important questions: Does it reflect a qualitative change in the structure of the macroeconomy in the recent period? If yes, how different are these features from the previous episodes when household borrowing increased?

Signs of structural shift

Since the share of interest payment in household income (interest payment burden) is the product of interest rate and debt-income ratio, any increase in the latter would lead to a greater interest payment-income ratio at a given interest rate. The recent period has been associated with a sharp rise in both these variables. The debt-income ratio of the household can potentially change through two distinct factors. The first factor pertains to a higher net borrowing-income ratio of the household, where net borrowing is the difference between total borrowing and interest payments. Household's stock of debt would rise at any given level of income if they decide to increase their net borrowing for financing higher investment or consumption.

The second route involves factors that are largely exogenous to the household's decisions-namely, the interest rate on the outstanding debt and the nominal income growth rate of the household. Any increase in interest rates or reduction in nominal income growth rate increases a household's debt-income ratio during a particular period. If the growth in interest payments outweighs income growth, the debt-income ratio will continue to grow. Such mechanisms can be described as "Fisher dynamics" following Irving Fisher, who explained the phenomenon of rising debt-income ratio in terms of changes in interest rate and nominal income growth rate.

Starting from the pre-COVID growth slowdown of 2019-20, the Indian economy has typically been characterised by such Fisher dynamics. The post-COVID period has seen a sharp rise in the ratio between nominal debt and nominal income of the household, largely on account of a lower nominal income growth rate. The debt-income ratio as an indicator of household leverage (or repayment capacity) has received scrutiny, particularly after the global financial crisis. Notwithstanding the recent rise in the lending rate that has contributed to the rise in debt-income ratio, the key structural feature that has emerged in the recent period is that the nominal income growth rate has often been lower than the weighted average lending rate. This seems to be the very mechanism by which a household's interest payment burden and debt-income ratio have increased.

Table 1a shows that the average value of the growth rate of household disposable income has been lower than the weighted average lending rate (WALR) for the period 2019-20 to 2022-23. The average value of the lending rate for this period is constructed from the Reserve Bank of India's quarterly figures. The household disposable income data is not yet available for 2023-24. However, the gross national income (GNI) growth rate, which is closely associated with the growth rate of household disposable income in the recent period, has recorded lower than the average WALR for this year. These emerging features seem to stand in contrast with previous episodes of high household borrowing, like the period of 2003-04 to 2007-08. While a long run comparison becomes difficult with the indicators used in Table 1a, one can use International Monetary Fund's lending rate data and the GNI growth rate for the analysis. **Table 1b** shows that the average GNI growth rate was greater than the average lending rate from 2003-04 to 2007-08. In contrast, the average GNI growth rate was lower than the average lending rate during the period 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Macroeconomic challenges

The comforting news at the present juncture is that India's debt servicing ratio is still lower than that of many countries. But with the emergence of the Fisher dynamics, there are at least two unique challenges that confront the Indian economy.

The first challenge pertains to decreasing the gap between interest rate and income growth and slowing down the growth of the debt-income ratio of the household. While the level of debt-income ratio presently remains low, frequent episodes of income growth lagging behind the lending rate can quickly push up household's interest payment burdens.

The second challenge involves stemming the possibility of downward adjustment of aggregate demand amid high interest payment and debt commitments of the household. Such possibilities emerge when households tend to maintain stock-flow norms in debt and wealth management by curtailing their consumption expenditure. The sharp decline in the consumption to GDP ratio in 2023-24 points towards such a possibility.

These challenges point towards the need to include an additional macroeconomic policy target to stimulate and support household income growth.

Zico Dasgupta and Srinivas Raghavendra teach economics at Azim Premji University

ILLUSTRATION: SEBASTIAN FRANCIS

A crisis of death on city's college campuses

Experts say it is important for colleges to have 'safe spaces' for students to talk about and sort out their problems to stop them from contemplating the extreme step. **Jahnavi T.R.** spoke to students, teachers, institution heads, and mental health consultants on a spate of student deaths

Trigger warning: The following article has references to suicide. Please avoid reading if you feel distressed by the subject.

It was May 14, just another day on the PES University campus in Electronics City in south-east Bengaluru. Pavan (name changed to protect identity), a second-year engineering student, remembers that the students were busy with last-minute exam preparation.

"I was studying in a classroom on the fourth floor in the morning. It was 10.10 a.m. I saw a student standing very close to the railing in the corridor. Then, right as I watched, he jumped," said Pavan, who was traumatised by the incident, with a stifled cry. Soon, they found out that a third-year engineering student, Rahul K., had died. He was the fourth student who had died in the same institution in the last one year.

In July 2023, Aditya Prabhu, a 19-year-old engineering student, took his life on the Girinagar campus in south Bengaluru on his birthday after he was allegedly verbally abused by college authorities for bringing his mobile phone into the examination hall. This incident sparked several protests by the student community demanding #JusticeforAdityaPrabhu. In October 2023, Surya M. Achar, a third-year year-engineering student, was found dead. Vignesh K., a first-year BBA student, also died in January 2024.

From examination-related troubles to relationship issues, investigating agencies have attributed a wide range of reasons for students taking the extreme step. Between October 2023 and January 2024, the death of students of reputed educational institutions made it to the news almost every month.

In November 2023, Ashwin Nambiyar, a 21-year-old student of Azim Premji University, was found dead in the hostel after allegedly being suspended for a week for violation of a rule. One month later, in December 2023, Diamond Kushwaha, a PhD student, ended his life at the Indian Institute of Science.

In January 2024, 19-year-old Dhruv Jatin Thakkar, a first-year student of the B.A., LL.B. programme at the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, died at the Attiguppe metro station.

On May 16, just a few days after the fourth death at PES University, Harshitha, a 21-year-old B.Tech student of Bangalore College of Engineering and Technology on the outskirts of Bengaluru, allegedly ended her life in her hostel room.

While these were widely reported, police and medical records showed that many others went under the radar.

According to police records, there were 258 (124 men and 134 women) student suicides in 2023 in Bengaluru. In 2024, until April, there have been 72 (34 male and 38 female). Worried officials have now got in touch with educational institutions to prevent such incidents.

> We have set up a dedicated Student Welfare Office, headed by a faculty chairperson, to ensure that students are reassured of constant support.
>
> **RAJLUXMI MURTHY V.**
> Chairperson, Student Welfare Office, IIMB

Stress on campus

The National Institute of Mental Health And Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), University of Melbourne, Australia, and several other Indian academic institutions recently collaborated on a study of 8,542 college students from 30 universities in 15 cities in nine States.

This study, titled 'Mental Health, Suicidality, Health, and Social Indicators Among College Students Across Nine States in India' showed that 18.8% of the students had considered suicide at some point in their life, while 12.4% of them considered ending their life in the last one year (before the study).

Further, 6.7% of students had attempted suicide at some point in their lives. Up to 33.6% of participants reported moderate to severe symptoms of depression, while 23.2% of them reported moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety.

"The cases of suicide among the youth are increasing every year. Many of them also have depression, anxiety, and severe academic pressure," said Anish V. Cherian, Additional Professor of Psychiatric Social Work at NIMHANS, who was also the lead author of the study.

In 2022, a project called the 'Urban Self-Harm Study' (USHaS) was taken up under the National Health Mission. NIMHANS set up intervention centres at five general hospitals in the city to help those who had attempted suicide.

"In our USHaS registry, we have seen around 6,000 suicide attempts, out of which 60-70% were young patients. They had come to the emergency department of hospitals for medical reasons (after attempting suicide). However, college students do not come to these hospitals if they attempt to end life. They rarely face medical intervention," Dr. Cherian said. He emphasised that such interventions could reduce reattempts, as the registry shows a 0.8% reduction in reattempts.

Stigma and silence

Dr. Cherian stressed how important it is for colleges to have "safe spaces" for students to talk about their problems so they have adequate support systems. He also spoke about postvention, a set of interventions provided to bereaved survivors, community members, and caregivers after a suicide.

"After a suicide, many who are in distress might be influenced to attempt the same thing. Some others might experience shame or guilt for not being able to help the person who took the extreme step. This is why it is imperative, especially for educational institutions, to provide postvention tools," he said.

However, many students and parents said that educational institutions often fail to provide any resources or support necessary to deal with mental health issues. The campus deaths went unaddressed, they felt, leaving students clueless about how to deal with the trauma.

Recalling the atmosphere at the university after the recent incident, Pavan said, "Colleges just move on after such incidents. There is no help offered, and no one even talks about it. We do not have counsellors on campus, but we have mentoring sessions with teachers. However, a lot of them fail to maintain friendly relationships with students."

Keerthi (name changed), a degree student from another educational institution, said, "The maximum that happens is the declaration of a holiday the next day or the same day with maybe around five minutes of mourning. Then the whole issue is treated like a taboo subject, and no one talks about it."

> An advisory will be issued to all educational institutions for comprehensive mental health programme.
>
> **C.K. BABA**
> DCP, Southeast Division

Girish Prabhu and Asha Prabhu, the parents of Prabhu, have been involved in multiple protests ever since their son's death, demanding that both the university and the government take corrective action. However, they allege that it has proved futile so far. "We met the Education Minister, the Home minister and other officials. But no significant action has been taken," Asha Prabhu said. Taking part in a recent protest that sought that institutions take greater responsibility for such incidents, she said, "The university has not even suspended the three professors who were charged by the police with abetment of suicide in my son's case. PES University neither attempted to contact us nor extended their condolences after the incident."

Speaking about the mental health support that was provided to her son, she said, "For Aditya, a counsellor was appointed to talk to him. Later, we found out that the counsellor was not a certified psychologist, but rather a B.E graduate who had no clue regarding mental health."

Expert committee report

At the behest of parents, students, and other activists, the Karnataka government constituted an expert committee headed by Jayakara S.M., Vice Chancellor of Bangalore University, to provide recommendations on preventing student suicides due to academic pressure.

The committee recommended a separate examination ordinance for private universities in Karnataka to guide the conduct of fair examinations. It also suggested that the Department of Higher Education constitute a committee to investigate the possibilities of conducting open-book examinations to spare students the stress of passing exams. It also suggested that the government make a serious attempt to do away with the marking/CGPA system and introduce a grading system instead.

The report also stressed the need for a student well-being centre in every public and private higher education institution while also speaking about the need to have debriefing sessions in educational institutions after the death of a student.

Activists and parents, however, say this report failed to speak of student harassment, which is often a vital issue. "The summary indicates nothing about student harassment but rather reflects on the pressure students receive from parents and teachers," Girish said.

Peer and mentor support

Teachers said simple acts and staying alert and sensitive can help avert a tragedy. "One of my students suddenly started wearing new clothes every day. He also started expressing gratitude towards others in a way that did not seem normal. After noticing this behaviour, another student and I asked him why he had suddenly changed. That is when we got to know that he had planned to end his life, and he had planned it down to the day he wanted to do it. We intervened and sent him to a hospital, which saved his life," said Dr. Cherian.

He said any behavioural changes, which can include expression of extensive irritability, grief or even happiness, could be a sign that the person needs help. "If you think someone is not okay, ask them about it. Younger people do not have strong social support networks. It is important for parents, teachers, and others in their circle to be empathetic," he said.

Officials from the Department of Higher Education refused to comment on the implementation of the committee's recommendations as well as the steps that the government will take to prevent student suicides. Many higher educational institutions that *The Hindu* reached out to said dealing with mental health issues of students is challenging because, despite providing resources, sometimes they might not be willing to make use of them.

While NLSIU and APU did not comment on the steps that have been taken since the death of students for the welfare of other students, J. Surya Prasad, Vice-Chancellor of PES University, said, "These cases were disturbing and shocking, and even tricky to understand. Students bring in a lot of (emotional) baggage from outside the university. While they are all intellectually strong, we in the university are in the process of strengthening them emotionally and mentally. We have adopted a lot of interventions, but we need to come up with that particular thing that gives them the confidence to deal with situations. As a university, we can ensure that we are working on it." Many other institutions also have dedicated mental health programmes to help students.

"We have set up a dedicated Student Welfare Office, headed by a faculty chairperson, to ensure that students are reassured of constant support. We strive to create an environment that works as a safety valve. There is a Student Welfare Committee, and the volunteers of 'Mitr' (a voluntary student support group in hostels) will soon undergo training from professionals to work more effectively as a peer support group," explained Rajluxmi Murthy V., Chairperson of the Student Welfare Office at Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB).

C.K. Baba, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Southeast Division, said he would shortly issue an advisory to all educational institutions in his jurisdiction for a "comprehensive mental health programme". "The vulnerability of students is on the rise and hence, a 360-degree approach is needed to create safe campuses for students. The advisory will contain guidelines on how universities can alter their physical infrastructure, the need for security audits and having a dedicated student safety officer and qualified counsellors. We have also talked about the establishment of a 24/7 confidential helplines for crisis intervention in universities while also stressing on the need to build a strong peer support network," Baba said.

(If you are in distress, please reach out to these 24x7 helplines: KIRAN 1800-599-0019 or Arogya Sahayavani at 104 for help)

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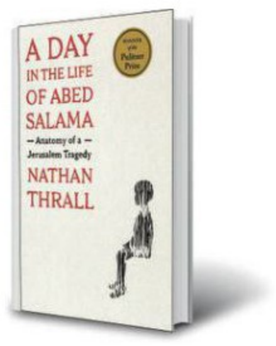
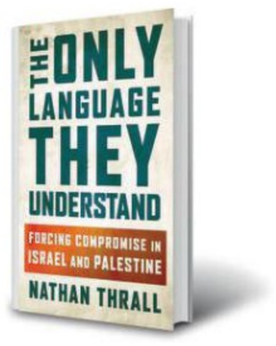
Shadow of conflict: People walk in an alley of the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila in Beirut's southern suburb. AFP





The 'Oslo trap', a number of wars and other challenges in the Israel-Palestine conflict

Two writers explain the reasons why peace is elusive in this West Asian region; while Rashid Khalidi gives a historical sketch of Israel's settler colonialism, Nathan Thrall writes about the impact of this colonial rule on ordinary Palestinian lives

Stanly Johny

It was a wet, grey, and extremely windy February morning in 2012, Nathan Thrall writes in *A Day in the Life of Abed Salama: Anatomy of a Jerusalem Tragedy*. On that fateful day, a trailer truck flipped on an old bus carrying Palestinian children on a highway in the Israeli-controlled Area C of the West Bank outside Jerusalem. The children, from a private kindergarten, were on the way to a local play centre. A few minutes after the accident, Abed got a call from his nephew. "Did Milad go to the picnic today? There was an accident with a school bus near Jaba."

Milad Salama is Abed's five-and-a-half-year-old son. Earlier in the day, Milad's mother, Haifa, had helped her boy into his school uniform: "grey pants, a white-collared shirt and a grey sweater". After the crash, Milad's school bus rolled over on the road, doors against the ground. The fire soon engulfed the bus. Six children and a teacher were killed and many more were injured.

Thrall, a Jewish American journalist who lives in Jerusalem, follows Abed's frantic efforts to trace his son. And through the story of the accident and that of Abed, Thrall writes about the day to day life of Palestinians under the many yokes of the Israeli occupation in a non-sentimental yet powerful prose. The bus is "crackling with flames," writes Thrall. A crowd had gathered around the bus and was screaming and shouting. The site of the accident was a few minutes drive away from a Jewish settlement and seconds from the Jaba checkpoint. It would take time for rescue workers to reach the site, navigating the morning traffic and Israeli checkpoints. An Israeli ambulance or soldiers could have reached the site in minutes. But about half an hour after the crash, Thrall writes, "not a single firefighter, police officer or soldier had come."

Thrall originally wrote about the accident in March 2021 in 'The New York Review of Books' in a 20,000-word essay. Abed Salama's quest to find his son "lays bare the reality of Palestinian life under Israeli rule," he wrote in the article. Later, he expanded the article into a book, with more details on the experiences of those whose children were there on the bus. The book won the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction this year.

Busting myths

Thrall is a familiar name for Israel-Palestine watchers. A former research director at the International Crisis Group, Thrall's previous book, *The Only Language They Understand*, is one of the most authoritative works on the Israel-Palestine conflict of recent times. The popular narrative about the Israel-Palestine conflict is that "terrorism" on the Palestinian side has been a major stumbling block for a two state solution. Thrall details the concessions the Palestinians made in *The Only Language*: "In the 1948 war, Israel captured 23% more territories than what even the UN had proposed for 'an independent Jewish nation'." When the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) was formed, its goal was to "liberate" all of Palestine. Later, the PLO settled for an independent Palestinian nation within the 1967 border – which is only 22% of the historical Palestine.

When the Oslo Accords were signed and a provisional government was formed in parts of the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinian leadership excluded Jerusalem from the process, allowing Israel to continue the occupation of East Jerusalem. But even with these compromises, the Palestinians failed to move towards sovereignty. Almost a quarter century after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority controls only parts of a restive West Bank, with Israel building more settlements in the occupied land. Gaza has been blockaded from all sides. That's why Thrall calls the Oslo process the "Oslo trap." It was against this background the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas in Israel unfolded.

Brutal occupation

For the Israeli government, Hamas represents Palestinian terrorism, and the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to "crush" Hamas. Israel has killed over 35,000 Palestinians in Gaza since October 7 and wounded tens of thousands more. Israel claims that it is a victim of Hamas terrorism. What Israel doesn't want to talk about is its brutal, illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. While Hamas's attack on Israeli civilians should be condemned, any understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict without the historical context would not be complete.

Rashid Khalidi, a Palestinian American historian, attempts to complete the circle by providing a compelling account of the loss of Palestine in his 2020 book, *The Hundred Years of War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonial Conquest and Resistance*. Often provocative, sharp and insightful, Khalidi's account, rich with interesting historical anecdotes and personal history, stretches from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to the then U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017.

According to Khalidi, there were six declarations of war on Palestinians during this time: the Balfour Declaration, the declaration of the state of Israel in 1948; the Security Council Resolution 242, which was passed after the 1967 war; Israel's attack on Lebanon in 1982 to oust the PLO from the country; the Oslo Accords and, the sixth, Ariel Sharon's visit to the Haram esh-Sharif (Temple Mount) in 2000, which triggered the Second Intifada.

When Khalidi gives a historical sketch of Israel's settler colonialism, Thrall writes about the impact of this colonial rule on ordinary Palestinian lives.

In these three books, the writers show that history and faith have bled with personal suffering which much of the international community has conveniently ignored for the past seven decades.

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz about the colour black — because why not?

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1
The Ancient Roman word for dark (or saturated) black became the source of the word 'negro' in English, 'nero' in Italian, and 'noir' in French. It was also the source of the name of a country. Which country?

QUESTION 2
The Latin word for black was 'ater' and was historically associated with cruelty and darkness of the soul. Name the modern English word derived from 'ater' used to describe acts of cruelty.

QUESTION 3
X is the name of a dark ink that likely originated in China around the third millennium BC. However, its name is the work of the British, who first came into it by trade with China. X is made by mixing a residue from the incomplete combustion of, say, vegetable matter with water. Name X.

QUESTION 4
Name the 16th-century reform movement in Europe in which, among other acts, the reformists decried the wearing of bright colours — especially by the clergy — and replaced them with black and grey gowns. Hint: This movement benefited greatly from Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press.

QUESTION 5
When a jaguar has a dominant allele (which it may have inherited) containing the melanocortin 1 receptor gene with some deletions, it is called X. When the same changed gene is inherited by a leopard through a recessive allele, it is also called X. What is X?

Visual Question: Until 2019, this was the blackest substance known to humankind. Name it. SURREY NANOSYSTEMS

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This popular actor was elected five times from the Mumbai North West constituency. **Ans: Sunil Dutt**
2. Which politician (deceased) holds the record for serving most terms from the Lucknow parliamentary constituency? **Ans: Atal Bihari Vajpayee**
3. The first representative was elected from the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha ticket. His son represented another party and also became the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. **Ans: Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee, Somnath Chatterjee**
4. This former representative from Madhubani was one of the first two communists to become Union Ministers. Name him and the Ministry he headed. **Ans: Chaturanan Mishra, Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**
5. Name this former MP who became the president of the National Rifle Association of India. **Ans: Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo**
Visual: Identify this gentleman. **Ans: Raj Narain**
Early Birds: K N Viswanathan | Prashant Nain | Akshay Kumar Khanna | Rajmohan V | M. Suresh Kumar

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

The difference between 'She has got to go there every Monday' and 'She has to go there every Monday' (K. Rajalakshmi, Tuticorin).

'She has got to go there every Monday' means that she must go there every Monday. "Has got to' implies a directive, a command. She has got to finish the work by tomorrow. 'She has to go there every Monday' means that it is her duty to go there every Monday. It refers to a habitual action.

Do out (S. Sindhur, Bangalore).

'Do out' means 'to clean and tidy thoroughly.'

I must do out my cupboard. It is so cluttered.

He has promised to do out my office room tomorrow.

This is an informal expression.

Spread oneself thin

If you are involved in too many projects, you cannot pay adequate attention to any one of them. You will be spreading your energies thin. When you don't have enough jam or butter, you can only have a very thin layer of jam or butter on your bread. From this, we get the Idiom 'to spread oneself thin.'

Concentrate on these two things. Don't attempt too many things and spread yourself thin.

Present Progressive Tense

Normally, the present progressive is used to indicate an activity that is continuing at the moment of speaking.

He is running.

She is cooking.

The baby is crying.

The present progressive is also used to indicate what a person is doing not in the immediate present but in a more general present.'

I must go home and do some work.

I am writing a novel now.

Here 'I am writing a novel' does not mean that the person concerned is writing a novel at the moment of speaking. He wants to convey that he has started writing a novel, and is continuing with it. He has not finished it. 'I am reading a novel' means that the person concerned is reading a novel at the moment or that he spends his leisure time reading a novel. He started reading it some time ago and has not yet completed it. He is not reading it at the moment. He reads it whenever time permits and will complete it sooner or later.

I am reading the Mahabharata now.

When the present progressive is used with always, continually, constantly, perpetually, forever, there is a suggestion of irritation and annoyance. He is always complaining. She is always forgetting his date of birth. He always goes late to the office. He is always going late to the office. 'He always goes late to the office' means that it is his habit to go late to the office. The progressive tense is used when you want to convey your annoyance or irritation.

Published in The Hindu on February 18, 1992

Word of the day

Insidious:
Beguiling but harmful

Synonyms: cunning, tricky, dishonest

Usage: *The spam is becoming more insidious.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/insidiouspro

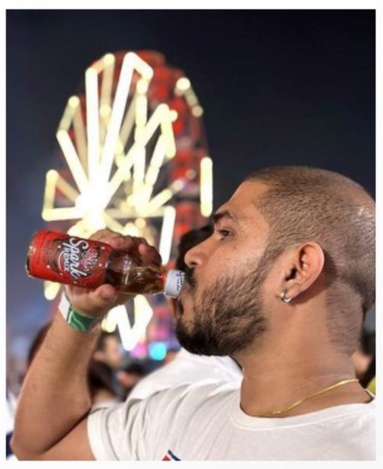
International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪnsídɪjəs/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Pop culture

Did you know that there are now about 700 goli soda brands in India? The drink's resurgence is fuelled by nostalgia, and a growing consumer preference for unique flavours

Praveen Sudevan
praveen.s@thehindu.co.in



The clink of glass marbles against bottles, a burst of citrusy fizz, and a childhood memory comes flooding back. Goli soda, the iconic Indian beverage, is returning across major cities.

Also known as banta soda in North India, it is a drink made with carbonated water, flavoured syrup, and sometimes a hint of salt. The magic lies in its unique bottling method. Unlike regular soda bottles, goli soda comes in a Codd-neck bottle with a marble stopper. To access the drink, you press the marble into the neck, releasing the pressure to create a satisfying fizz.

Since the mid-20th Century, goli soda has held a special place in the Indian beverage culture. However, the rise of mass-produced aerated drinks led to goli soda's decline. "Large companies came in with standardised designs and universal flavours," says Abdul Khader, co-founder of Spark Goli Soda, a Hyderabad-based brand. "They offered a taste people were familiar with, and goli soda, with its regional variations, kind of faded away."

But, over the past five years, goli soda is experiencing a delightful comeback.

Reasons for resurgence

According to Abdul, there are now about 700 goli soda brands (including hyperlocal ones) in India. Social media has played a crucial role in the drink's second wind, with eye-catching photos and videos sparking interest among younger generations, many unfamiliar with the drink. "There's a definite nostalgia factor," says Raghuraman Gobinathan, co-founder, Kaalaiyan Goli Soda in Coimbatore.

But he believes the resurgence goes beyond just fond memories. Cultural identity is a factor, too. "The Jallikattu protests in 2017 definitely played a role in the growth of our brand," he says. "There was this anti-MNC sentiment in Tamil Nadu, and people were looking for alternatives to the colas of big brands. Goli soda, a traditional South Indian beverage, fit the bill perfectly."

Goli soda also offers a distinct taste profile, often featuring local ingredients. "We focus on 'desi' flavours like *pudina* (mint) and *jeera* (cumin)," says Abdul. "These resonate with people and perfectly complement Indian cuisine like biryani. It's a return to familiar, authentic tastes."

The emphasis on hygiene and safety standards also helps. "Unlike the old days, many brands now use semi-automatic machinery and prioritise proper certification for their ingredients," says Dinesh Kumar Gopal, director, Phoenix Goli Soda in Chennai. "This focus on quality resonates with today's health-conscious consumers." It also ensures a shelf-life of six months.

Rahul Johar, founder-CEO, Oxbow Brands, which sells goli soda in Bengaluru, sheds light on the drink's growing popularity. "Goli soda has seen a notable uptick in Bangalore in recent years. Its nostalgic resonance coupled with diverse new brands and flavours has played a crucial role in its resurgence," he explains.

This nostalgic appeal is not limited to older generations; the younger demographic is also being introduced to this cultural icon through regional cinema and innovative marketing.

The scorching summer of 2024 has significantly boosted goli soda's sales. "This fiscal year, we have witnessed a remarkable surge in sales, with our brand Dobra Pop Goli experiencing a three-fold increase over the last two months compared to the colder winter months," says Rahul.

Fizz or fizzle?

Despite its resurgence, the drink faces stiff competition from established beverage giants. Abdul points out the pricing challenges. "Glass bottles are expensive, and while we have automated parts of the process, the production costs remain high compared to PET plastic bottles (that contain colas)," he says. This cost factor makes it difficult for goli soda to compete with multinational cola brands that offer similar volumes at lower prices.

Dinesh emphasises the cost and effort of maintaining high standards. "We don't compromise on quality, but this means our goli soda is more expensive," he explains. This price difference can be a barrier for some customers.

The lack of brand value is another hurdle. "Most goli soda companies are micro-brands with limited regional presence, which affects growth. Unlike big cola companies, we don't have the same level of brand recognition," Abdul adds. This has led to a slight dip in demand.

Reinventing the marble

Goli soda is not just riding on nostalgia; it is evolving with modern trends. Vendors are experimenting to keep the beverage relevant, from innovative flavours to new packaging.

For instance, Spark Goli Soda has introduced a Remix line, combining multiple flavours such as Green Twister (lime and green apple) and Peach Punch (peach and lime), catering to younger and international markets.

The secret to success, according to Dinesh, is a mix of traditional and modern flavours. "When it comes to Chennai or even the whole of Tamil Nadu, nothing beats paneer (rose water) flavour," he says, "But the name causes a bit of a mix-up outside Tamil Nadu as people confuse it for the dairy paneer."

Packaging plays a crucial role, too. Traditionally sold in robust glass bottles with a marble stopper, the packaging is a nostalgic experience. However, vendors are modernising the packaging to cater to contemporary consumer preferences and regulatory requirements.

"We developed a new, lightweight bottle that meets international quality standards," says Abdul, "It's similar to the bottle used for the popular Japanese drink Ramune. We have launched a discount programme for our single-use glass bottles. You'll earn points towards your next purchase when you buy a case of 24 bottles and return the empties."

Meanwhile, Dinesh emphasises their commitment to quality packaging. "We use natural colouring agents, sugar (as opposed to cheap and harmful sweetening agents), and sturdy, recyclable plastic bottles. Our bottles are properly sealed and designed to prevent children from accidentally swallowing the marble, ensuring safety and quality."

More than just a drink, it is a symbol of local tradition and a nostalgic reminder of simpler times. So, pop the marble, unleash the fizz, and savour the taste of a bygone era.

> ***Unlike the old days, many brands now use semi-automatic machinery and prioritise proper certification for their ingredients***
>
> **DINESH KUMAR GOPAL**
> Director, Phoenix Goli Soda

Fizzy memories (Top) Spark Goli Soda's appearances at music festivals; (right) 100-year-old Kannan and Co. Goli Soda in Vellore.
C VENKATACHALAPATHY AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Karthik Gowda, producer-distributor from KRG Studios, explains why the Kannada film industry has blown hot and cold the last two years

'Local audience is priority'

Vivek MV
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Setting high goals Karthik Gowda (below) collaborates with Sudeep; (left) the poster of *Powder*.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Karthik Gowda, founder of the production and distribution company KRG Studios, is passionate about making new-generation films in Kannada.

Having donned the responsibility of the executive producer at Hombale Films for pan-Indian hits such as *KGF: Chapter 1* , *KGF: Chapter 2* and *Kantara,* Karthik has now shifted his focus to KRG Studios.

The banner's maiden project was the family drama *Rathnan Prapancha,* starring Dhananjaya and Umashree.

After receiving praise for its debut film, KRG Studios bankrolled *Gurudev Hoysala,* a fast-paced cop drama with a social message.

The distributor-producer spoke to *The Hindu* on the progress of the Kannada industry in the last couple of years, the challenges it faces and what to expect from his banner.

Excerpts from the conversation:

Q: *Tell us about the upcoming projects from KRG Studios*

A: First up is the Kannada movie *Powder,* set to release on July 12. We are excited about this collaboration with TVF, who wanted to get into feature films after making a mark in the online space. It's a new-age comedy caper. KRG and TVF want to do movies for young adults. We have also announced a Tamil movie with Anjali Menon.

Then there is a project with Sudeep, who is returning to direction after a decade.

Finally, we are excited about *Uttarakaanda,* a two-part crime drama to be shot in North Karnataka.

Q: *Do you think Kannada cinema has failed to capitalise on the success of* KGF *and* Kantara*?*

A: Yes, and the reason for it is the lack of consistency! Everybody has to take the blame, including me. Last year wasn't great for Kannada, though we got a few gems. When the bar is set high, it becomes a challenge to meet expectations. I believe that a good film will always find its audience. Several times, a small Kannada film has emerged as a box-office success against mighty non-Kannada movies, like how *RangiTaranga* enjoyed a great run amidst the dominance of *Baahubali* and *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*.

So, one can't blame competition from other industries. The key is to position your film well to ensure that it is visible widely.

Q: *Amidst the pan-India wave, Kannada filmmakers have forgotten to make movies for the local audience...*

A: I agree. To impress the non-Kannada audience, you are losing your regular audience. Maybe filmmakers are eyeing that extra money that comes with pan-Indian movies. But a film like *Kantara* was made for the local audience. Even in Karnataka, many didn't know about the cultural significance seen in the movie.

Only after its success in Karnataka did it do well across the country. So, your local audience becomes your priority.

Q: *As a producer, have you found a solution for Kannada cinema's OTT conundrum?*

A: I think it's just a phase, and this situation won't last for too long. Also, streaming platforms must appoint someone who knows the local market, so that he or she can pick movies at the right price. A great film might get sold to a decent number, while a mediocre movie could get sold for a huge amount.

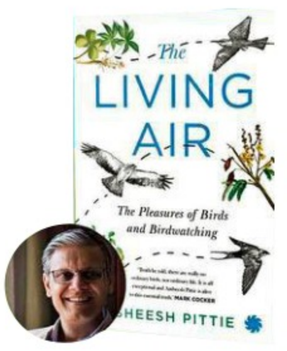
STEPOUT

Get into ACK-tion

Atta Galatta presents 'ACK-tion Day', a children's festival by Amar Chitra Katha (ACK).
The day-long activity will feature a colouring booth with ACK providing the art, a doodle wall and a giant crossword.
There will also be storytelling sessions by the team of ACK. For tickets visit BookMyShow.
On May 25, 11am at Atta Galatta.

Thalis and sodas

Sodabottleopenerwala introduces a rozana feast called Soda Lunch Thalis.
These *thalis* come in the options of vegetarian, chicken, mutton, and seafood.
Each plate also comes with its set of desserts.
The *thalis* pay homage to Bombay and Parsi-Irani cuisine.
Ongoing at Plot Number 25/ 4, Lavelle Road. Call 07022255299.



Illustrated book

Champaca presents a talk with Aasheesh Pittie, author of a book *The Living Air,* along with the book's illustrator, Sangeetha Kadur.
They will be in conversation with Anita Mani of Indian Pitta Books.
On May 26, 5pm at Champaca. Call 09353608989 to register.

Return home or face ire of family, Deve Gowda warns grandson Prajwal

'The law will take care of the accusations against him, but not listening to the family will ensure his total isolation,' the former Prime Minister has said

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Former Prime Minister and Janata Dal (S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda on Thursday warned his grandson and Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, saying he should return home and surrender to the police, or face his anger and that of all family members.

Mr. Gowda, who issued the warning through his letter posted on X (formerly Twitter), said: "I have issued a warning to Prajwal Revanna to return immediately from wherever he is and subject himself to the legal process. He should not test my patience any further."

In the letter with the title "My Warning To Prajwal Revanna", Mr. Gowda said: "This is not an appeal that I am making, it is a warning that I am issuing. If he does not heed this warning, he will have to face my anger and the anger of all his family members. The law will take care of the accusations against him, but not listening to the family will ensure his total isolation. If he has any respect left for me, he has to return immediately."

"I spoke to the media about Prajwal Revanna on May 18, when I was headed to the temple to offer puja. It took me some time to recover from the shock and pain he has inflicted on me, my entire family, my colleagues, friends and party workers. I have already said that he should be given the harshest punishment under the law if found guilty," stated the two-page letter.

H.D. Deve Gowda has said that he will ensure that there is no interference in the inquiry against Prajwal Revanna from him or his family members. FILE PHOTO

> It is of utmost importance to me to earn back the trust of the people. They have stood by me for over 60 years of my political life and am deeply indebted to them.
>
> **H.D. DEVE GOWDA,**
> Former Prime Minister

Stating that his son and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy had advocated this line since the day the alleged sexual abuse case broke out, the former Prime Minister said: "People have used the harshest words against me and my family in the last few weeks. I do not wish to stop or criticise them."

Unaware of activities

Pointing out that he cannot convince people that he was unaware of his grandson's activities, the former Prime Minister said: "I cannot convince them that I have no desire to shield him. I cannot convince them that I am not aware of his movements, and that I was not aware of his foreign trip. I believe in answering my conscience. I believe in God and I know the Almighty knows the truth."

Mr. Gowda said he would "not comment on political conspiracies, exaggerations, provocations and falsehoods that have been maliciously spread in recent weeks."

"I am very sure people who have done it will have to answer God and pay for it heavily one day. I place my truth and my burdens at the feet of the Lord."

The former Prime Minister also said that he would ensure that there would be no interference in the inquiry against Mr. Prajwal Revanna from him or his family members.

"There is no emotion in this regard in my mind whatsoever, there is only the cause of justice for those who have suffered as a result of his alleged actions and misdeeds. It is of utmost importance to me to earn back the trust of the people. They have stood by me for over 60 years of my political life and am deeply indebted to them. As long as I am alive, I will never let them down," he added.

Female foeticide: State bars attenders inside ultrasonography rooms

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

Tightening its grip over illegal sex determination, the Health Department has now barred the entry of any attender or relative along with a pregnant woman inside the ultrasonography room. Besides, the display of additional monitors in the ultrasound room is also prohibited.

An official circular in this regard was issued last week. Following this, all ultrasound scanning centres and hospitals where scanning is done have been directed to display boards outside the room stating that no attender would be allowed inside.

This comes in the wake of the recent unearthing of a female foeticide racket that was being run in the Health Department's staff quarters at Pandavapura in Mandya district. Despite a crackdown on illegal abortions in Karnataka over the past few months, female foeticide is going on unabated.

State Health Commissioner Randeep D., who also heads the State PCPNDT Task Force, told *The Hindu* that several violations had been noticed at scanning centres during inspections. The circular was aimed at effective implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, he said.

Video recording

Radiologists and gynaecologists, who attended a recent PCPNDT workshop, raised a concern that attenders were accompanying pregnant women inside the ultrasound room and were capturing videos and photos of the ultrasound procedure.

"They also expressed concern that the recorded video is used to identify the sex of the foetus by sharing it with other gynaecologists, radiologists, and sonologists.. This is a violation of the PCPNDT Act under Section 5, sub section (2) which states that no person, including the person conducting pre-natal diagnostic procedures, should communicate to the pregnant women concerned or her relatives or any other person the sex of the foetus by words, signs or in any other manner," he said.

All PCPNDT District Appropriate Authorities had been directed to ensure the new directions were followed strictly by all scanning centres. Appropriate action would be initiated against those found to be violating, he said.

Quoting the PCPNDT Act, the Commissioner said that under Section 4, sub-section (4), no person, including a relative or husband of the pregnant woman, could seek or encourage the conduct of any pre-natal diagnostic techniques on her except for detection of medical issues such as chromosomal abnormalities, genetic metabolic diseases, and congenital anomalies.

New trend

Vivek Dorai, State Deputy Director (Medical Acts), who is also the State PCPNDT nodal officer, said a new trend was emerging in the State wherein some attenders who recorded the videos of the ultrasound procedure were sharing it with their friends or relatives staying abroad to get the sex of the foetus determined.

"Sex determination is legal in some countries such as Singapore and Thailand, and in Dubai. The circular barring entry of attenders inside the scanning room is to curb this dangerous trend," he said.

"It is also noted that an additional monitor is installed in the ultrasound room enabling pregnant women to watch the ultrasound procedure. Sometimes, radiologists, without saying anything or making any gestures, can simply point on the private parts of the foetus to indicate the gender. Hence, for effective implementation of the PCPNDT Act the display of additional monitors are prohibited in the ultrasound room," Dr. Dorai added.

Council polls: Congress expels 6 rebel candidates

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Congress on Thursday expelled six party workers who are contesting as rebel candidates in the elections to six graduates and teachers' constituencies, for a period of six years.

Those expelled are: S.P. Dinesh (Shivamogga), Ferdinand Lawrence (Bengaluru), B.R. Nanjesh (Chikkamagaluru), Lokesh Talikatte (Chitradurga), and Vinod Shivaraj (Bengaluru), according to a KPCC press release.

CM asks officials to ensure good stock of farm inputs as Karnataka receives rain

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With many districts recording more than the normal pre-monsoon rain from March, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has instructed deputy commissioners and ZP CEOs to ensure availability of farm inputs in godowns. The State has received 123 mm of rain as against the normal of 87 mm from March 1.

While rainfall was excess in eight districts, it was normal in eight. Reservoirs were filled up to 20% of their capacity, the Chief Minister said, during a video-conference with senior State and district officials.

Noting that rainfall during the monsoon would be normal compared to the drought in 2023, he said the Agriculture Department prepared a plan targeting sowing on 82.4 lakh hectares during kharif season. Already sowing had been completed on 68,600 ha, he said.

More than nine lakh quintals of seeds were available as against the demand for 5.52 lakh quintals during the kharif season. A total of 14,608 quintals of seeds were kept at the Raitha Samparka Kendras (RSKs). As of May 22, 5,492.44 quintals of seeds had been distributed. A release said 14,86,067 tonnes of fertilizers were kept in stock in godowns.

On budgetary proposals

With more than two months having gone owing to poll code of conduct in the current financial year, Mr. Siddaramaiah instructed senior officials to issue orders related to budgetary proposals in June and expedite tendering process for implementing development works.

The State Budget was tabled in February 2024 and since then not much progress has been achieved on account of the poll code. The poll code would be in force till June 6, he said, and asked officials to issue orders related to budgetary announcements by the end of June. Following the death of a 22-year-old youth and 48 people falling sick after consuming contaminated water at K. Salundi village on the outskirts of Mysuru, the Chief Minister directed deputy commissioners, ZP CEOs and municipal commissioners to ensure potable water to all residents of the State.

Shaw Prize in Astronomy to Indian-origin U.S. scientist

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Srinivas R. Kulkarni, an Indian-origin U.S. scientist and brother of Sudha Murty, has been awarded the prestigious Shaw Prize in Astronomy for 2024, according to a release.

"Kulkarni, who serves as the George Ellery Hale Professor of Astronomy and Planetary Science at Caltech, has been awarded the Shaw Prize in Astronomy for 2024 for his ground-breaking discoveries on millisecond pulsars, gamma-ray bursts, supernovae, and other transient astronomical phenomena," said a release.

Govt of Karnataka
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD DIVISION KALABURAGI
No: EE/PWD/KD/TS-2/Tender Notification/2024-25/ 468 Date: 22.05.2024
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

1) Name of Work: Executive Engineer PWD Division Invites tender for the (29) Works under KKRDB for indent No GEN (24)10550,10849,10852,10822,10826,10828,10845,10846, 10832,10821,10843,10782,10818,10838,10819,10853,10854,10855,10840, 8437, 10864,10863,10862,10861 (3 Work Reserved for SC Category.10825,10822,10850) (2 Work Reserved for ST Category.10820,10851), 2) Estimate cost: **Min Rs. 10.00 Lakhs Max Rs. 500.00 Lakhs**, 3) Eligibility of Contractor: Class IV,III,II,I & above, 4) EMD Amount: Rs.12500.00 Rs 400000.00, 5) Pre-Bid Meeting: **30.05.2024 (11.00 Hrs)**, 6) Last date for queries: **31.05.2024 (17.30 Hrs)**, 7) Last date for Submission of Bid: **03.06.2024 (16.00 Hrs)**, 9) Date of Opening of Technical Bid : **04.06.2024 (10.00 Hrs)**, 10) Date of opening of Financial Bid (for Two Cover) : **06.06.2024 (11.30 Hrs)**, 11) Enquiries: Office of the Executive Engineer PWD Division Kalaburagi, 12) Note: GST Will be Paid Separately, 13) Website: WWW.e-proc.Karnatak.gov.in, 14) Bidders Should Note That: Note: 1) Undersigned reserves the right to Cancel / Postpone/ Reject any or all the tenders at any point of time during tender process without assigning any reason. 2) Changes in the tender process will not be Published in the News Papers Bidders may get Details of Changes In KPPP Portal Only.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
PWD Division Kalaburagi

DIPR/Kalaburagi/13/KSMC&A/2024-25

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
Revenue Department, M. S. Building, Bengaluru

No: E-RD 168 GRC 2023 **Date:21.05.2024**

NOTIFICATION

Whereas, upon considering the report of the District Magistrate, i.e., Deputy Commissioner, Bengaluru Urban District and, after due investigation of the complaints of depositors it has come to the notice of the Government, that M/s Tiforp Trading Services Pvt. Ltd. is involved in fraudulent transactions by clandestinely and illegally collecting deposits or money from the general public and thereafter have failed to return the same either after maturity or on demand made by the depositors or complainants with promised interest and other assured benefits and thereby have failed to render the services promised to them.

And whereas, it has further come to the notice of the Government that M/s Tiforp Trading Services Pvt. Ltd. and people associating with them have been acquiring lands, movable and immovable properties, cash and others from and out of the deposits or money so collected, from the depositors or complainants and thereby deviating from the intended purposes of accepting the deposits or money.

And whereas, the Government has reason to believe that the actions of the M/s Tiforp Trading Services Pvt. Ltd. and people associating with them are acting in and detrimental to the interest to protect the interest of the depositors of M/s Tiforp Trading Services Pvt. Ltd.

And whereas, now the Government after considering the report of the Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies and Competent Authority M/s Tiforp Trading Services Pvt. Ltd. and satisfying itself about the urgent need to protect the interest of the depositors and in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of Section 3 of the Karnataka Protection of interest of Depositors in Financial Establishment Act, 2004 (Karnataka Act 30 of 2005) hereby makes the following order, namely:

"ORDER"

Now therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of Section 3 of the Karnataka Protection of interest of Depositors in Financial Establishment Act, 2004 (Karnataka Act 30 of 2005), the Government under the circumstances stated above having satisfied that in order to protect the interest of depositors it is necessary to attach the movable and immovable properties believed to belong M/s Tiforp Trading Services Pvt. Ltd.

Therefore, the Government hereby attaches movable properties as specified in the Annexure to this order believed to have been acquired by the M/s Tiforp Trading Services Pvt. Ltd. either in its own name or in the name of any other person from and out of the deposits collected by the M/s Tiforp Trading Services Pvt. Ltd. and where it transpires that such money or such other properties of the said financial establishments, or the personal assets of the promoters, partners, directors, managers or members or any other person of the said financial establishments is not sufficient for the repayment of the deposits or interest or such other assured benefits to the depositors.

Note: All the afore said movable properties from the date of publication of this order in the Official Gazette, shall forthwith vest with the Competent Authority, who has been appointed by the Government, pending further orders from the Special Court.

By Order and in the name of the
Governor of Karnataka
Sd/-
(Anwar Basha)
Deputy Secretary to Government,
Revenue Department (Services-1,
SSLR & Special Cell)

Annexure

Sl. No.	Registration Number	Vehicle Details	Present Market Value	Remarks
1	KA 51 ML 5758	BMW 530 D BS IV BMW Car Engine No. 0112Y162 Chassis No. WBAJC9709JWA33065 Date of Registration: 12-03-2018	****	**** After obtaining the absolute order in respect of the attached vehicles from the Hon'ble Special Court, Market value will be ascertained by obtaining the valuation report from the RTO.
2	KA 05 MW 3003	TUCSON CRDI 4WD AUTO GLS TUCSON CAR Engine No. D4HAHU600764 Chassis No. MALJ381ASHM012224 Date of Registration: 25-10-2017	****	
3	KA 03 MM 4978	INNOVA 2.5 V (M4) TOYOTA INNOVA CAR Engine No. 2KD6554464 Chassis No. MBJ11JV40072248020610 Date of Registration: 15-06-2010	****	
4	KA 05 KD 9825	Activa 4 G SCV 110 H BS4, Honda Scooter Engine No. JF50ET5526183 Chassis No. ME4JF507HHT525890 Date of Registration: 01-09-2017	****	
5	KA 05 KD 9942	DIO SCV 110 FH BS4 Honda Scooter Engine No. JF39E72079072 Chassis No. ME4JF39DHH7057830 Date of Registration: 04-09-2017	****	

Sd/-
(Anwar Basha)
Deputy Secretary to Government
Revenue Department (Services-1,
SSLR & Special Cell)

DIPR/CP/111/2024-25

Aligning climate justice with disability justice

Several of the guidelines that are being suggested today for sustainable living come from a very ableist point of view and do not represent the disabled adequately, says Merry Barua at a talk by ATREE

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

It was in October, 2022, that Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Mission LiFE (abbreviation for Lifestyle for Environment), a campaign that nudges individual and community action to protect environment.

The campaign gives out a bunch of action points based on behavioural changes such as taking the stairs instead of an elevator, use of bicycles, reduction of e-waste, dietary changes like consumption of millets and nutri-cereals, and so on.

While it may look doable at the face of it and there is consensus that climate adaptation needs concerted action from all quarters including governments, corporates, communities and individuals, many a times, such guidelines come from a very ableist point of view causing a rift between environmental justice and disability justice, point out experts.

"Some of these guidelines are not only very ableist, but also very upper class," remarks Merry Barua, founder and director at Action-for-Autism (AFA). She was speaking at the 'Intersectionality Series' Talk conducted by Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) on 'Climate Action on the Spectrum.' Barua was in conversation with multi-disciplinary practitioner Dilip Kumar Mekala.

Neurodivergent means that they experience the world differently, and hence, the way they interact with the world is different from people who are neurotypical, says Merry Barua. GETTY IMAGES

Merry Barua, Aradhana Lal, SVP Lemontree Hotels, and Reeta Sabharwal, Director F&O, Action For Autism at AFA's annual art exhibition, Views from Planet Autism.

Merry Barua with a team from The Shri Ram School and their partners from Singapore on a visit to Action For Autism, Delhi.

Unpacking neurodivergency

Typically, autism has been looked at from a very deficit-based and medical understanding which sees autistic people as those who can't communicate or socialise and are very rigid in their ways, notes Barua.

The concept of neurodiversity, on the other hand, addresses it differently and acknowledges the multiple ways in which different people's brain works.

Neurotypical refers to the people whose brains function similarly to most others and hence is the majority.

"Neurodivergent means they experience the world differently, and hence, the way they interact with the world is different from people who are neurotypical. These are people with conditions like dyslexia, autism, ADHD, etc. They have very unique strengths and unique challenges," says Barua who emphasizes that neither is better or worse than the other, but simply two different ways of perceiving the world and interacting with the environment.

"It's a far more accepting and inclusive way of looking at them than seeing them as people who can't do the things that we the majority do. It's a more inclusive way of looking at people with a different neurological functioning."

What's on the table?

Switching to a plant-based diet is often prescribed as one of the behavioural changes for climate adaptation.

While a change in dietary habits may not seem a great deal to the neurotypical people belonging to the middle class and above, the same is not the case with neurodivergent people and those who belong to marginalised communities or indigenous populations, Barua points out.

She explains, "One of the things about autistic people is that they perceive sensory information in a very different way from neurotypical people. Most autistic people suffer from sensory overload. When you talk about diets, one of the common things found among a lot of autistic people is that they tend to have very restrictive diets. Some of them eventually manage to move on and deal with some changes, but (for many) it's not like they can eat everything."

She cites the example of her son who could not eat vegetables until his mid-adulthood. She also points to the case of individuals at Ananda Assisted Living (run by AFA) who cannot, for instance, eat rice as they find its texture too difficult.

According to a 2006 study by Jennifer Ledford and David L. Gast, 89% of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) exhibit unusual patterns of food acceptance. Studies have also shown how individuals on the spectrum have been struggling with problems such as food refusal, failure to eat the usual family diet and inability to accept novel foods.

"To say that you must change what you eat and how you eat is extremely ableist, without considering what different sets of people eat, or how they manage their resources which determine their diet," says Barua.

Public transport is today considered as one of the most effective measures to fight climate change.

According to a United Nations report, transportation currently contributes about 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and demand-side interventions such as shifting transport modes to walking and public transport would be essential in mitigating climate change impact.

However, this also demands a robust public transport system in place which becomes all the more critical for disabled people. Predictability, precision and clear signage are crucial for people on the spectrum. The public transport system in several parts of the country, however, lacks the same making it challenging for them to navigate it.

Barua, who points out that in some of the major Indian cities, even people without autism find it difficult to travel by public transport, also notes that there are still several rural areas where there is no public transport system yet.

"At Ananda, there are a few who can take the metro. Some will have a meltdown if they are forced to take our chaotic public transport like the buses in Delhi. The audio and olfactory overload is way too much for them. The metro system runs in an orderly, timely and visually structured fashion more or less, so some can travel by it. But we don't have metros everywhere in our country. So, what are people supposed to do?" she asks.

An inclusive world

So, what can be done to enable neurodivergent people to function and interact with the society at large and be better represented in the climate adaptation strategies?

To start with, make all information clear and easily available, says Barua.

"Not only has there to be clear and precise information but there also needs to be an easily accessible place to get that information from."

"Secondly, it has to be multi-pronged. Any support services that we provide the information through have to be easily and clearly available. The support services also have to be tailored to the needs of autistic people," she says citing the example of disaster preparedness drills.

"A lot of the instructions that are given at that time are not very clear. Those have to be unambiguous, taking into account the fact that autistic people have difficulties with language where the intent is not made very clear. So, any emergency preparedness has to be in a language that's open, direct and clear."

Yet another factor is preparedness and letting people know in advance of a situation whenever possible.

"Every emergency is not going to be immediate. Sometimes you do have prior information. So, getting that information out in advance in a very clear way is important," she says. "Above all, ensure that we address the root cause of climate change so that we don't have to deal with the emergencies that are brought on by our actions that lead to climate change."

Emergency Medical Response System inaugurated

EMRS inaugurated by Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari (centre) at Command Hospital Air Force.

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In order to provide expert guidance and definitive care during medical emergencies for serving personnel and their families of the Indian Air Force (IAF) across the nation, an Emergency Medical Response System (EMRS), was inaugurated by Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari at Command Hospital Air Force in Bengaluru.

The EMRS is a first-of-its-kind 24/7 telephonic medical helpline for serving IAF personnel and their families across India.

According to IAF, the system aims to provide prompt response by a team of medical and paramedical professionals to the caller experiencing an emergency anywhere in India. "The responding medical professional shall provide immediate advice to the caller while simultaneously getting in touch with the IAF medical facility nearest to the caller. This facility symbolises IAF's commitment towards incorporating technology to deliver high quality healthcare in the event of an emergency. The sole aim of EMRS is to save valuable lives," IAF said.

The inaugural event on May 21 featured a demonstration of the system's capability and outreach, highlighting the ease with which expert guidance would be provided to the distressed caller.

Protest by residents forces BWSSB to send water tanker to Muneshwara Nagar

The high price of private water tankers has also affected the economic condition of the residents

Abhilekh Baruah
Debasmita Chowdhury
BENGALURU

Residents of Shampura main road, Muneshwara Nagar, Kaval Bairasandra, Bengaluru, have been deprived of water supply provided by the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) for the past four months.

Drew attention

Responding to the prolonged water scarcity, the residents of the area took to the streets in protest on Wednesday. The protest, which drew attention to their plight, stopped only after the intervention of the police. It was not until 1.30 p.m. that a 4000-litre tanker was finally delivered by BWSSB, providing relief to the water-starved residents.

"It was only because of our protest that the BWSSB provided us with a 4000-litre tanker instead of the usual 2000-litre tanker, " said Liyaquat, a Muneshwara Nagar resident. He also stated that the situation had slightly improved since last week, with BWSSB now supplying water tankers. Further, he added that the issue has made them sleep deprived due to the delivery of water tankers from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m.

Residents who have gathered to collect water in Muneshwara Nagar. DEBASMITA CHOWDHURY

Private tankers

"This issue has caused havoc on more than a hundred families spread across the 10th to 14th Cross of Muneshwara Nagar," said Nadeem, a resident of the 13th Cross. Another resident from the same area spoke of how the situation had impacted his economic condition.

"Till now, I have bought water from three private tankers, who deliver water only three days after booking. Besides, it costs ₹1500 for each tank of 6000 litres with a demand for an additional charge of ₹500 for delivering the water tankers through such narrow alleys," said Malik Basha.

He further said, "We really hope the BWSSB looks into the matter because whenever we call for help, the officer does not answer our calls."

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 24, 1974

Decision Soon on Import of Foreign Films

Bangalore, May 23: Arrangements for the import of foreign films were expected to be finalised in the next one or two months, Mr. A.J. Kidwal, Secretary, Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting indicated here to-day. A committee was now finalising the arrangements.

The National Film Corporation was expected to be set up in about a month, Mr. Kidwal said.

Mr. K. K. Murthy, Managing Director, State Film Industry Development Corporation, acquainted Mr. Kidwal with the corporation's plans, including the construction of a chain of mini-theatres.

Upper Krishna as National Project: Plea to Centre

Bangalore, May 23: In the State's Fifth Plan draft presented to the Centre, the Government had urged that the Upper Krishna Project be treated as a national project and to be taken up outside the State Plan, the Revenue Minister, Mr. Hutchmasty Gowda, told the State Legislative Council today.

Replying to Mr. Govind P. Vadeyaraj (Cong-O), he said that total estimated cost of the project was Rs. 67 crores. It had been designed for ultimate utilisation of 442 tmc ft. for irrigating 20.84 acres and the decision of the Cauvery Water Tribunal assured the utilisation of 155 tmc ft. of dependable yield under the project. But the tribunal, however, had allowed the State the freedom to make any reallocation within its share of water, Mr. Gowda said.

Karnataka InFocus

THE HINDU

IN SHORT

Third highest producer of sugarcane

Karnataka is the third largest sugarcane-producing state in the country, after Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Karnataka grows the cash crop on about 4.75 lakh hectares. Sugarcane is grown in 16 districts in Karnataka. Seven of them - Belagavi, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, Mandya, Mysuru, Chamrajanagar and Bidar -- are the major sugarcane-producing districts.

Gap between yield and acreage

Uttar Pradesh stands at the top of sugarcane-producing states, with around 178 million tonnes. Then comes Maharashtra with 92 million tonnes and Karnataka with 43 million tonnes. T.N. with a production of 104 tonnes per hectare is in the first place. It is followed by Karnataka with 91 tonnes per hectare, and Maharashtra with 86 tonnes per hectare.

Sugar factories also increase

India has over 700 installed sugar factories in the country with a crushing capacity of about 340 lakh MT of sugar. Karnataka has 76, around 65 situated in northern Karnataka and 12 in southern Karnataka. Their number and installed capacity have increased 2.5 times in less than 10 years. Many of them are owned by politically powerful families, in the north.

Recovery varies from State to State

Sugar production is counted as a percentage of the commodity produced by crushing and processing the crop. States like Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Telangana have percentages higher than 10, and most other states clock a recovery percentage of around 7-9. Some factories in Maharashtra, however, have achieved recovery rates between 12-14.

Why ethanol is getting a push

Ethanol is among dozen-odd byproducts that can be made from sugarcane. All new-age factories and most traditional units are producing ethanol. The Union government's push for increased blending of ethanol with petrol to 20% by 2025-26 may not only prompt more factories to put up plants, but also increase the number of sugar and ethanol factories.

What is driving so many farmers to take to sugarcane cultivation?

In the last 6-7 years, the area under sugarcane has nearly doubled in Karnataka and Maharashtra, though it has gone up only partially across the country

Rishikesh Bahadur Desai
BELAGAVI

Sugarcane (Saccharum officinarum), a grass that was domesticated in Papua New Guinea over 6,000 years ago, has over the years become one of the world's largest crops in terms of area of cultivation. Its various hybrids are cultivated by farmers in the rotund cropping method on multi-year cycles. Seeds sown once are harvested for three-four years. The most popular variety is Nayana (Co -86032), that occupies nearly three fourth the total cultivated area in Karnataka. Farm sciences universities and research centres are busy developing new climate resistant and high sugar-loaded varieties.

Farmers taking sugarcane to a nearby sugar factory near Belagavi. P.K. BADIGER

Spurt in area

More and more farmers are cultivating sugarcane in recent years. In the last 6-7 years, the area under sugarcane has nearly doubled in Karnataka and Maharashtra, though it has gone up only partially across the country. In Karnataka, it increased to 6.9 lakh hectares from 3.7 lakh hectares between 2016-2023. Acreage in Maharashtra has increased to 13.5 lakh hectares from 9 lakh hectares in the same period. Pan -India, the crop has touched 59 lakh hectares from 47 lakh hectares in these years.

The Union government's biofuel drive that is pushing for increased ethanol adoption in petrol vehicles, discovery of several by products of sugarcane that are not bound by limiting laws like levy allocation, relaxed export policies, and improved efficiency of extraction, processing and fermentation technologies, are said to be the reasons behind this unprecedented hike.

"The main reason is how much and how fast industry is putting money in the farmers' pocket. Farmers are abandoning other crops as they do not fetch remunerative prices,'' said Sidagouda Modagi, farmers' leader and Krishik Samaj president. He pointed out that though the Union government declares MSP for nearly 30 other crops, there is no systematic mechanism for their procurement. "Sugarcane is the only crop where FRP is announced one year in advance. Factories not only stick to it, but also offer higher prices to attract farmers. That explains the rush towards it,'' he said.

Other food processing industries are engaging in contract farming by signing agreements with individual farmers. "Sugar industry is the only organised buyer. What is more, it is not easy for small farmers to grow other cash crops like tobacco, areca, rubber or spices. That is why sugarcane has become a much sought after crop,'' Modagi explained. He demanded that the government should redraft laws to make factories share the profits realised by selling all by products with sugarcane suppliers, and to make agreements between farmers and factories legally binding.

Several byproducts

Sugar mills can produce over a dozen byproducts, with incremental investments and minor modifications in their machinery, experts say. A report by the State-run S. Nijalingappa Sugar Institute in Belagavi has identified ethanol, oxygen, co-generated electricity, green hydrogen, bio-CNG, bio-compost, haemoglobin based proteins, calcium carbonate, acetylene and aldehides, apart from traditional products like bagasse, molasses, press mud and biodegradable paper and plates as some products. Apart from running graduate and post graduate courses in sugar and alcohol technology, SNSI develops new varieties, trains farmers and sugar industry personnel. "A sugar factory can also build a circular economy around itself by producing innovative by-products, engaging with farmers and increasing their income,'' said Rayappa Khandagave, director, SNSI.

At a recent national workshop on "Beyond Ethanol", SNSI suggested to sugar factories that they could build farmers communities, facilitate solar energy production by individual farmers and help them connect to the grid. "Factories can thus become mass renewable energy producers. They can also diversify into other crop based food processing industries like milk, soya, millets and protein supplements, and share their profits with farmers if possible. Thus, both the factory and the farmers will grow,'' Khandagave said.

Labourers loading the harvested crop on to trucks near Nandagad in Khanapur taluk. P.K. BADIGER

Temporary sheds put up for labourers engaged in cutting sugarcane outside a factory in Bagalkot district.

S. Nijalingappa Sugar Institute in Belagavi. P.K. BADIGER

Ethanol economy

"Ethanol has become a hope for the future. It will not only help farmers, but also the factories,'' says Shivanand Patil, Minister for Sugar and Sugarcane Development. "When we started factories a few decades ago, we depended only on sugar, whose price and quantum was controlled by the government. But now, there are several by products including ethanol, whose trade is not restricted. This has radically boosted the finances of the factories. While old factories are enhancing their crushing capacities, new ones are being set up. Some factories have expanded capacity by 4-5 times. All this will benefit farmers'' the minister said.

The average ethanol blend in the State is around 11% now. Union government has set a target of 20% by 2025-26. The current price of ethanol is around ₹55 per litre, that helps farmers get 2-3% more per tonne of sugarcane supplied. "Last Thursday, the oil manufacturing companies placed orders for ethanol valued at ₹ 66 crore. This is expected to increase by nearly 80% next year,'' officials say.

However, leaders like Laxman Savadi, former deputy Chief Minister, are sceptical about the ethanol economy. He feels that factories will go slow on increasing ethanol output as the OMCs are underpaying them. "Compared to the factories, the OMCs are making twice the money for half the effort. Unless the government addresses this issue, I do not foresee an ethanol revolution," he said. The Sangamesh Sugar Factory in Athani in which he is a director, is yet to put up an ethanol plant, he pointed out.

Sugarcane remains a highly polarising crop. Opposition to the crop is based on factors ranging from ecology to health. Sugarcane needs more water per unit area than most crops. It also tends to damage the soil quality due to mono cropping, owing to repeated cultivation on the same land and high chemical input use. Increased health consciousness has also made the new generation reject sugar and look for alternative sweeteners. Another is the allegation that sugarcane is a "political crop", that can influence electoral outcomes.

However, those who support it, including farmers, look at it as a commercial crop that has an assured organised market that assures good returns year on year. It is not difficult to maintain, has easy disposal and ensures timely payment of farm gate prices, which is rare in other crops, they argue.

It is a vital cash crop that sustains the second biggest agro-based industry in the country after textiles. It is a low-risk crop that assures farmers minimal returns even in adverse climatic conditions. On an average, a farmer growing sugarcane on one-acre harvests around 30-40 tonnes. It has a fair and remunerative price of ₹3,145 per tonne currently. The profit per acre is up to ₹ 20,000 - ₹40,000 per acre, as per the agriculture department's input-output estimates.

Farm gate prices are as realised at the farmer's field. The factories that harvest and transport the produce deduct ₹700 per tonne from the FRP.

Says Khandagave, "A few years ago, some officers of the Union government were seeking our opinion on whether it would be wise to discourage sugarcane as it is considered a water guzzling crop. Then, we studying the economics of sugarcane. We found out that it was the only crop that brought them assured returns over the years. Banana came a far second. No other crop, including those who have a minimum support price announced by the union government, came close."

Focus on drip irrigation

However, SNSI and farm sciences universities have been urging farmers to switch to drip irrigation. There is empirical evidence to show that drip irrigation saves 50% water and increases yield by over 50%. "There are instances in Maharashtra and Karnataka where farmers have harvested 100 tonnes per acre, against the average of 35 tonnes per acre,'' the director said. Farmers have been asked to take up rotary tilling of green manure and mulching to improve soil quality.

"We have recommended sugar factories to set up plants to extract sugarcane from beetroot and tried to create awareness among farmers to take up beetroot cultivation, said Ashok Dalwai,'' CEO of the national rain-fed area authority. This will address the concerns of water usage and help farmers better use the land as beetroot takes around six months to grow compared to sugarcane that needs one year to mature, according to him.

Elephant population enumeration commences in Karnataka

It is being held in the forests bordering all southern States. In BRT Tiger Reserve, 170 staff have been deployed for it

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Hundreds of Forest Department personnel fanned out across 10 forest divisions of Karnataka for the synchronised elephant population enumeration of southern States, which got under way on Thursday.

Though parts of Bandipur and other areas received heavy showers, the exercise was not affected, according to Ramesh Kumar, Conservator of Forests, Project Tiger.

The three-day exercise, which will conclude on May 25, is a fallout of the Inter-State Coordination Committee (ICC) charter which was unveiled at a meeting of senior Forest Department personnel and Ministers of Karnataka and Kerala, at Bandipur in March this year.

Forest Department personnel engaged in elephant enumeration exercise at Bandipur on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The objective is to prepare a database of elephant population in the forests bordering Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh to ascertain the population dynamics that will help conceive mitigatory measures to reduce human-elephant conflict and those involving other wild animals.

However, places such as Hassan and Chikkamagaluru – despite being epicentres of human-elephant conflicts – have been left out of the exercise as the forests in these regions are not contiguous to jungles of the neighbouring States.

According to authorities, there have been 22 human deaths caused by elephants between January and May this year in Karnataka while four additional deaths were caused by other wild animals.

During the same period 25 elephants have also died in the State though 23 deaths have been attributed to natural causes and the others to unnatural causes.

Some of the forest divisions of Karnataka where the elephant population enumeration exercise was carried out included Bandipur, Nagarahole, BRT Tiger Reserve, Bannerghatta National Park, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, M.M. Hills Wildlife Sanctuary, Madikeri Wildlife Division, and Madikeri Territorial Division, Virajpet division, apart from Kolar.

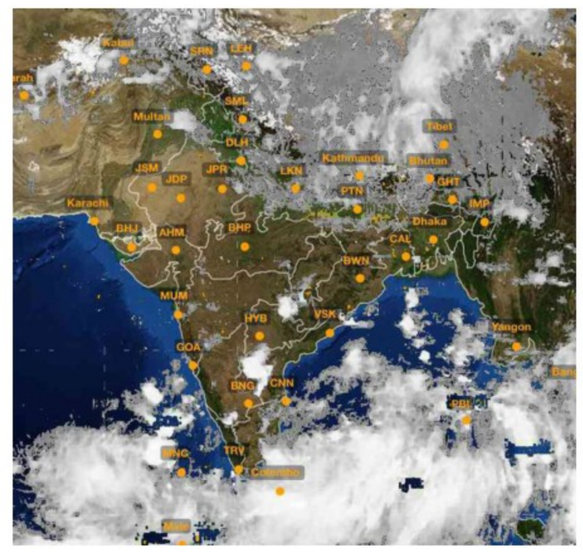
The first day of the elephant enumeration exercise was block sampling or direct count exercise which entailed each of the teams to survey regular beats and cover an area of 5 sq km noting down records of elephant sighting and enter the data. "The teams returned by 6 p.m. and had significant sightings though the numbers etc., will be known only after analysis of data and will take some time," Mr. Ramesh Kumar added.

On Friday, the field staff will conduct line transect exercise and each team will walk a distance of 2 km recording data on either side of the transect line. The water hole count exercise will be taken up on Saturday where elephant enumeration will be taken up from an observation point established at different points from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. The results will be analysed by scientists of Indian Institute of Science.

In BRT Tiger Reserve, 170 staff have been deployed for the exercise while more than 300 staff are taking part in Nagarahole and about similar numbers in Bandipur.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, Mahe, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Heat wave conditions likely in isolated pockets over Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, west Uttar Pradesh, northeast Madhya Pradesh and central Maharashtra

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	37.2	27.4	Kozhikode	83	28.4	25.0
Ahmedabad	—	46.6	30.8	Kurnool	—	39.4	28.7
Aizawl	5	35.8	22.8	Lucknow	—	37.4	28.0
Allahabad	—	37.4	27.8	Madurai	—	34.2	26.1
Bengaluru	—	33.4	23.2	Mangaluru	1.2	30.6	26.0
Bhopal	—	44.4	30.0	Mumbai	—	34.9	28.9
Bhubaneswar	—	37.7	27.6	Mysuru	26	—	20.1
Chandigarh	—	39.2	31.7	New Delhi	—	41.0	30.6
Chennai	—	36.3	28.7	Patna	—	34.9	26.3
Coimbatore	0.2	31.2	22.8	Port Blair	148	28.5	24.3
Dehradun	—	37.5	26.6	Puducherry	—	35.0	27.2
Gangtok	7	25.1	17.0	Pune	1	39.4	27.7
Goa	—	33.7	27.0	Raipur	—	40.4	25.7
Guwahati	—	38.2	25.0	Ranchi	—	33.0	23.0
Hubballi	—	35.0	24.0	Shillong	3	26.7	17.4
Hyderabad	1	36.4	23.1	Shimla	—	29.6	21.5
Imphal	—	33.7	20.5	Srinagar	—	32.2	15.0
Jaipur	—	44.0	32.2	Thiruvananthapuram	31	29.3	25.1
Kochi	137	28.2	25.0	Tiruchi	1	34.5	26.0
Kohima	—	27.0	17.5	Vijayawada	—	37.7	28.4
Kolkata	11	36.7	27.4	Visakhapatnam	—	35.8	29.7

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.11	..37	22	... 153	...126	
Bengaluru	.15	..22	90	 37	47	
Chennai	.10	9	92	... 142	.....—	
Delhi	.28	..18	56	... 260	...159	
Hyderabad	...3	..29	55	 61	...115	
Kolkata	...8	..34	19	 46	51	
Lucknow	...6	..46	20	... 169	...137	
Mumbai	.32	..14	..7	... 157	...141	
Pune	..—	..59	96	 52	94	
Visakhapatnam	.11	..11	12	 10	30	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Dholpur, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 304 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu recorded a healthy AQI score of 19

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Harish Poonja released on station bail

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

Harish Poonja, Belthangady MLA, was released on Wednesday night on station bail after he took part in the inquiry in connection with two cases registered against him following the arrest of BJP Yuva Morcha president Shashiraj Shetty in an illegal quarrying case.

A case was registered against Mr. Poonja on May 19 after the MLA created a ruckus at Belthangady police station on the night of May 18 over the arrest of Shashiraj Shetty in connection with an illegal quarrying case.

A second case was registered on May 21 against Mr. Poonja following a protest on May 20 without permission in front of Vikasa Soudha at Belthangady opposing the arrest of Shashiraj Shetty.

Many BJP activists had assembled outside the house of Mr. Poonja on Wednesday morning following the visit of a police team to question the MLA in connection with the two cases.

Shambu Sharma, advocate of Mr. Poonja, insisted that the police issue a notice calling the MLA for the inquiry.

A large posse of policemen were deployed outside his house from 8 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. when two notices summoning Mr. Poonja for the inquiry were issued.

Later, Mr. Poonja went to the police station to take part in the inquiry.

Council polls: Retire or face action, BJP tells Raghupathi Bhat

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

General secretary of State BJP V. Sunil Kumar on Thursday said the party would take disciplinary action against former Udupi MLA K. Raghupathi Bhat if he did not retire from the fray of the Legislative Council elections from South West Graduates' constituency, within 24 hours. The BJP has nominated Dhananjaya Sarji, a doctor from Shivamogga, while Mr. Bhat, a three-term MLA, is contesting as a rebel in the election.

Speaking to mediapersons in Udupi, Mr. Sunil Kumar, who is MLA for Karkala, said that it would be inevitable for the party to take disciplinary against Mr. Bhat if he did not retire.

Mr. Sunil Kumar said that the party was hopeful that Mr. Bhat would retire.

"The party will take disciplinary action against whoever contests against the official candidate irrespective of who the person is. The action will be taken against those who embarrass the party and those who indulge in anti-party activities," Mr. Sunil Kumar added.

'Kerala Governor trying to saffronise education'

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Upping the ante against Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Higher Education Minister R. Bindu has accused him of attempting to "saffronise" the higher education sector in the State.

Dr. Bindu also charged Mr. Khan, who is also the Chancellor of universities, with sabotaging reforms that were being implemented by the State government in the sector.

Speaking against the backdrop of the Kerala High Court order quashing the Governor's nominations to the Kerala University Senate, she claimed his nominees lacked outstanding academic credentials.

The Minister claimed various court judgments have proven that the Governor's interventions were not in the right direction.

Strike mode

Grinding halt: Garbage collection vehicles remain parked in Vijayawada after the outsourced workers of the municipal corporation went on a strike on Thursday. They are demanding hike in wages and other benefits. G.N. RAO

Heavy rain to continue in Kerala; three districts on orange alert

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Heavy rainfall is likely to lash Kerala on Friday also under the influence of a low-pressure area formed off the Kerala coast over the southeast Arabian Sea.

Pathanamthitta, Kottayam and Idukki districts are on orange alert for isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall on Friday, the India Meteorologiocal Department said on Thursday.

Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Palakkad are on yellow alert.

Various district administrations have opened relief camps with heavy rainfall pounding the State. In all, 223 people have been shifted to eight camps in different parts of the State, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Thursday.

Braving downpour: Water level is rising in a waterbody at Karuppadanna in Thrissur. THULASI KAKKAT

He urged people to be on guard against strong winds and evacuate to safer locations, if the need arises. Four shutters of the Malankara dam in Idukki were opened 80 cm each, as per a 4 p.m. update.

People residing on the banks of the Thodupuzha and Muvattupuzha rivers have been advised to remain alert.

Meanwhile, the current heavy rainfall spell is expected to decrease in intensity from Saturday, the IMD indicated.

Fishermen have been advised against setting out to sea on Friday, given the likelihood of squally weather.

On Thursday, the continuing heavy rainfall prompted the IMD to scale up its warning levels and place Ernakulam and Thrissur on red alert for extremely heavy rainfall.

REGIONAL FOOD RESEARCH & ANALYSIS CENTRE
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Udyan Bhawan Campus, 2 Sapru Marg, Lucknow-226001 (U.P)
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'49% of lake areas in Bengaluru Urban covered with trees and shrubs'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A recent report on the impact of planting invasives on lakes in Bengaluru Urban has revealed that 49% of lake areas are covered with trees and shrubs.

According to a report by Paani.Earth on "Assessing the scale and impacts of planting invasives on lakes in Bengaluru Urban and its surrounding districts", the Forest Department has actively planted exotic and invasive tree species across lake beds since the 1990s. As a result of this, there has been an increase in forest cover.

An aerial view of Hesarghatta lake. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The report states that, according to data from the European Space Agency (ESA) World Cover 2021, 49% of lake beds are covered with trees and shrubs, with specific areas like Anekal Taluk experiencing even higher coverage at 57%.

"In some instances, entire lakes have transitioned into forest-type woodlands or tree parks," the report states.

The Paani.Earth team comprising Nirmala Gowda, Madhuri Mandava and Khushbu Birawat said in the report that trees are typically planted around the peripheries of lakes where they serve as riparian buffer zones.

"In these zones, trees play crucial roles in maintaining lake ecosystem health by filtering pollutants, stabilizing shoreline soils, providing habitat for diverse wildlife, regulating water temperature through shading, maintaining stream channel structures by reducing runoff velocity, and absorbing excess water during heavy rainfall to mitigate flood risks," the report said.

However, the report said when trees, especially invasive and exotic species, are extensively planted directly on lake beds, they pose significant problems. The team utilised the ESA Copernicus Sentinel 2 imagery to assess the mature tree coverage across the lakes in the Hesaraghatta Lake catchment of the Arkavathi River Basin.

"Using supervised classification techniques, we estimated that approximately 2,917 acres out of the total 11,961 acres of lake area were covered with vegetation, representing 24% of the lake area as of 2023," it said. It added that their spatial analysis revealed that nearly half (47%) of the lake area in the Hesaraghatta Lake catchment is covered by trees and shrubs.

The ESA dataset revealed that in Bengaluru Rural and Chikkaballapura, around 40% and 35% of lake areas consist of tree and shrub cover, respectively. In Kolar district, 38% of lake areas feature tree and shrub coverage, and in Tumakuru district, tree and shrub cover accounts for 38% of lake areas in the district.

Powerful, symbolic

The recognition of Palestine by more nations is an indictment of Israel

The announcement by Ireland, Norway, and Spain, of their intent to formally recognise the state of Palestine, next week, is one more important sign of the changing tide of international opinion that Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cannot afford to ignore. In just the past month, in the UN General Assembly, 143 countries, including India, passed a resolution calling for the recognition of the Palestinian state by the UN Security Council, where the U.S. has vetoed such a move. Earlier this week, the International Criminal Court Prosecutor moved applications for arrest warrants for Mr. Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for operations after October 7 in Gaza as well as the Hamas leadership for the terror attack that killed 1,200 in Israel, terming these as "war crimes". On Friday, the International Court of Justice will pronounce another verdict in the petition by South Africa calling for additional measures in the prosecution of Israel for "genocide". The latest decision by the three countries, that have been vocal in their criticism of Israel – they join eight EU members that have already recognised Palestinian statehood – may not materially change the situation on the ground. But it is meant to be what the Irish Taoiseach Simon Harris referred to as an "act of powerful political and symbolic value" to Israel, especially as it essays what could be the "final assault" on Rafah. While practically every country has condemned Hamas's terror attacks, Mr. Harris said it would be a mistake to ignore the legitimate Palestinian government in the West Bank, saying that "Hamas is not the Palestinian people". Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said that the move aimed to support "moderate forces that are on a retreating front in a protracted and cruel conflict". Spain's action followed its denial of port facilities to a Danish-flagged ship with explosive material from India meant for Israel, which it said was a firm policy now. Israel's response, however, has been to recall its envoys and summon the envoys of all three countries for a dressing down.

In the immediate future, the multiple messages of near-global consensus are meant to push Israel's government to rethink its plans for Rafah, to stop more civilian losses, and to allow humanitarian aid free access into Gaza. But in the longer term, they are meant to remind Mr. Netanyahu that even if he has disassociated himself from the "two-state solution", this is something the world believes is the road map to peace. By turning deaf to these messages, Mr. Netanyahu is only furthering his isolation, especially from an international community that came out in full sympathy on October 7, but has grown increasingly horrified by the military campaign since then.

Snap poll

Rishi Sunak seems to have sensed a window of opportunity for his party

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak sprung a surprise election announcement when he revealed that the United Kingdom would head to the polls on July 4. While the incumbent government of the Conservative Party was not required to call for an election until January 2025, almost since the day Mr. Sunak entered 10 Downing Street, most polls have suggested that his party would lose the next election by a margin of over 20%, the likes of which are "usually only seen at exceptionally bad moments in the midterm". It is possible that Mr. Sunak and his team seized upon the political capital that may accrue to them from the recent announcement that the U.K.'s inflation rate has dropped to 2.3%, the lowest in at least three years. There might have been a few other factors including a positive assessment of Mr. Sunak's cabinet in steadying the economic ship in the post-COVID-19 scenario, and a legal victory securing the government's plans to implement immigration reforms that will see some asylum seekers sent to Rwanda to have their applications processed there.

While it is true that polls suggest voter frustration at the end of 14 unbroken years of rule by the Conservative Party, Mr. Sunak's comment that this election will take place at a time where the world is "more dangerous than it has been at any point since the end of the Cold War", is not without merit. Indeed, the denouement of the long-drawn Russian invasion of Ukraine could make or break the security paradigm for Europe and the U.K., including not only serious questions regarding territorial sovereignty on the eastern front but also energy security with knock-on effects for prospects for economic stability. Similarly, the churn in West Asia, including the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Gaza and the strategic churn punctuated by the threat of war in the Iran imbroglio, will have echoes throughout the region and certainly for the U.K. Finally, it is unclear that even with the Rwanda plan receiving a legal green light, the Sunak government has been able to have a tangible impact on small boat crossings at a broad level. Contrarily, government statistics indicate that even though such arrivals dropped by around 33% during 2022 and 2023, boat crossings for 2024 are at a "record high" by comparison, and between January 1 and May 21 of this year more than 9,800 people crossed the U.K.'s border through such means. In this context, his remark that the Labour Party would want people to think "this election is over before it's even begun" might not be wrong, but he and his colleagues would do well to ask where the opposition's confidence in this regard stems from.

An absconding MP, the colossal failure of the system

Hassan city in Karnataka, citadel of the Gowda family, has a proud legacy. Apart from hosting the Hoysala temples of the 11th century, it boasts of sending a Prime Minister, Chief Minister and a few MPs, MLAs to office - all from the same family. But now, the city also carries the dubious distinction of being the site of a series of dastardly crimes committed against hapless women in its precincts. So strong is the pernicious grip of the family over the polity that none of the survivors being exploited since 2021 had the courage to speak up or lodge a complaint until the sordid drama was forced into the open, with some political help.

Yashovardhan Azad

is Chairman of DeepStrat, a former Central Information Commissioner and a retired IPS officer who served as Secretary, Security, and Special Director, Intelligence Bureau

Many questions

The case of missing Janata Dal (Secular) Member of Parliament, Prajwal Revanna, who is allegedly at the centre of this crime plot, is a telling commentary of a broken criminal justice system and the shadow of politics looming large over every aspect of administrative and police functioning. After all, how can one, no matter how important he or she is, go beyond the reach of law for so many days after allegedly committing such heinous crimes? Who is responsible for this abject failure to apprehend him in time?

Reportedly, various pen drives containing grisly scenes of the alleged rape, and sexual assault against at least 100 survivors, were strewn across public locations, such as the Maharaja stadium, parks and other places, on April 24, just two days before the polling in Hassan. This ought to have been the first clue for police to act. The prosecution branch should have been consulted for acting upon the minefield of information leading to the accused. Especially as he was known to all, the police should have sent a notice to the alleged perpetrator, Prajwal Revanna, that, pending enquiry, he should not leave the city or should have gone to the court for a restraining order, registering a case *suo motu*. A look out circular (LOC), should have been issued by the immigration authorities at the request of Karnataka police to prevent the accused from escaping via an airport. Yet, nothing was done and the accused escaped on the strength of his diplomatic passport to Germany without visa, one day after the polls.

Why did the police not act in time? Why was the Special Investigation Team (SIT) not constituted on the same day? Were they busy with elections, or perhaps the prospect of acting against the accused on their own was too daunting for the local police. But then, the information about videos was known much earlier to higher authorities, when the gag order on media was imposed by the court on airing them to the public. What does it say about the role of Home Secretary, DGP and Chief Secretary, who are well-versed with the most important daily developments of the day? Could the release of CDs have been well-timed to reap maximum political benefits? Irrespective of these factors, it was incumbent upon senior officials to authorise immediate punitive action since every political regime chants paeans of women's empowerment and Nari Shakti.

> Parliamentary proceedings mention 'zero tolerance of crimes against women', yet, when it comes to the crunch, punitive action in India fails spectacularly

The speed with which action proceeded after accused escaped is as impressive as the laggardly moves before. The first case was lodged a day after the flight of the accused. The SIT was then formed. The survivor's statement was arranged before a magistrate and an LOC was issued. MLA HD Revanna, the father of the accused who is also allegedly involved in the case, was arrested on May 4 for allegedly kidnapping a victim of sexual assault and released on bail after a few days. More women, from various walks of life, summoned the courage to lay bare the brutal assault on their bodies. As of now, several rape cases have been registered.

But the accused is missing and unlikely to return to India before the election results. In our democracy criminals have as good a chance of victory in polls as others. Maybe, as an MP, he still expects some privileges during his arraignment.

Reaching out to Interpol

The Central Bureau of Investigation is the interface with Interpol in our country. The State police must register their information with the CBI to reach out to Interpol for locating, apprehending any accused. But as of now only a blue corner notice (BCN) has been issued by the Interpol and not a red corner notice (RCN).

Interpol notices are basically to share critical, crime-related information between member countries, seeking international cooperation for tracing or apprehending fugitives in any part of the world. Various types of notices are issued by the Interpol - red, yellow, blue, black, green, orange, and purple. In the context of this case, the BCN is to collect additional information about a person's location, identity or activities in relation to a criminal investigation while an RCN is issued for seeking the location and arrest of the person wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence.

The BCN has drawn no response so far. The RCN requires a court warrant for arrest which was only issued by the court on May 19, on the plea of the SIT. Accordingly, RCN would be or already is issued against the accused. The path is also clear for cancellation of his passport.

But this not a signal that the accused may be imminently arriving in India. He has the option to go to the courts and he can remain abroad with recourse to the courts in Germany. Many on the wanted list from India abroad have managed to evade extradition through the tortuous legal procedures. In criminal cases, such delays help in vitiating the investigation process, with witnesses turning hostile or not being able to recall events accurately. This possibility underscores the importance of nabbing the accused at the earliest in heinous cases.

Every Budget, central or State, allocates more funds towards women welfare. Every statement on law and order in Parliament or outside mentions zero tolerance of crimes against women. Laws have been strengthened, rules amended and yet when it comes to the crunch, punitive action does not measure up to expectations.

The present case reveals inaction on all fronts. Ideally, the JD(S) should have expelled the MP the same day that the case was registered. His passport too should have been cancelled under the Passport Act since the Central government has the powers to revoke it on reasonable grounds such as involvement in criminal acts. As pointed out above, the state police have already failed to apprehend the MP in time. The senior officers too buckled under pressure. Moreover, despite having knowledge of the MP's nefarious acts, the BJP and the JD(S) backed his nomination for fighting the elections and even the Prime Minister campaigned for him. Was this an intelligence failure, or did the information on him not matter?

The plight of the survivors

No one can say how soon the lost ground can be retrieved. But in the meantime, the SIT should have more women officers and investigators to reach out to all the women victims. Such crimes cannot go unpunished because of delays, technical lacunae, poor investigation or weak prosecution. One expected a nation's outcry against such a hardened criminal. There is no media trial since the media was already gagged by the court order on the appeal of the accused. Every section of society should join hands in crying out for justice for the survivors.

As the nation awaits the trial of a man in a case involving perhaps the world's most horrific incidents of crimes against women, the most heart-breaking image in the case – of a 48-year-old loyal household help, who served the father and grandfather of the accused for years, pleading with folded hands to the accused while the accused sexually assaulted her – will continue to send shivers down the spine of people for years to come. No punishment can ever be enough for such a dastardly crime.

The views expressed are personal

A visit to preserve China's interests in Europe

The Chinese President Xi Jinping's first trip to Europe (except Russia) in five years, earlier this month, was carefully constructed as evidenced by his ports of call – France, Serbia and Hungary. The first is a leading proponent of the notion of "strategic autonomy" of Europe, the second is a non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization, non-European Union (EU) outlier close to Russia, and the third is a pro-Russian maverick that has blocked many resolutions criticising China in EU.

Manoj Joshi

is Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

World events, visit's goals

The COVID-19 pandemic had the effect of closing off China to the rest of the world for an extended period, forcing Beijing to re-adjust its global investment goals because of economic problems. Indeed, Mr. Xi did not travel abroad for two and a half years and has not been too frequent a traveller even after the restrictions were lifted last year.

In this period, the world had been turned upside down geopolitically by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the meantime, the China-United States trade war has morphed into a technology war and the Biden administration has broadened and intensified the technology restriction regime on China. In the U.S. and Europe, accusations of Chinese dumping of cheap goods have intensified and there are calls for retaliation. A lot of them focus on electric vehicles (EV), an area where China has emerged a world leader.

Mr. Xi had three goals – to prevent the EU from getting too close to the U.S., to avert a trade standoff with EU and to bolster China's standing in Europe. He has had to do all this in the face of the fallout of the Russian invasion of Ukraine that has hardened the western alliance against Russia, with China having to sustain some collateral damage. It has also had an indirect influence in shaping negative EU views on China's trade policy.

> The Chinese President's trip to Europe was a carefully constructed one in the face of adverse geopolitics

The goals of French President Emmanuel Macron were fairly straightforward – to promote French trade interests as well as to push China to stop supplying weapons components to Moscow. He did his own messaging by meeting the Tibetan Sikyong (Prime Minister of the government in exile) Penpa Tsering on the eve of the Xi visit.

In Paris, Mr. Xi also met with the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen who has advocated a policy of "de-risking" from China by reducing dependence on Chinese imports and technology. Both Mr. Macron and the EU chief urged China to ensure a more balanced trade with Europe.

France is united with the EU on the issue of the cost advantage that Chinese EVs have over European cars. While the Chinese are keen to ride on the strength of their EV industry, the Europeans are equally keen to protect their car manufacturers.

In 2019, the EU had recast its doctrine to define China as "a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival." A sceptical Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has described it as driving to a crossing where the lights are simultaneously green, yellow and red. But this somewhat convoluted formulation seeks to balance Europe's China policy between the economic opportunity it sees there, with the risks from China's economic policy and its national security postures.

The focus on Hungary

Mr. Xi got a warm welcome in Serbia and Hungary which do not otherwise attract top-drawer visitors. Chinese foreign direct investment in Serbia is growing and it has invested $5.5 billion in the country, mainly in copper mining and a steel processing plant. The big investment common to both countries has been in the upgradation of the Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway project, and there are plans for more roads, tunnels and bridges with Chinese investment. Newer plans exist for railways to link Chinese factories in eastern Hungary to markets in western Europe. CATL, the giant Chinese battery company, is setting up a plant to supply German EV makers. The Chinese EV giant, BYD, which hopes to capture the European market, has chosen the southern Hungarian city Szeged to set up its first factory in Europe.

Hungary is today the closest ally of China within the EU and it provides China access to the world's largest trading bloc. Its world view is at odds with its Eastern European neighbours who are wary of Russian aggressiveness, and by extension, China.

Between eastern and western Europe

China had sought to develop ties with eastern European countries through the so-called 17+1 China and Eastern Europe (CEE) community to serve as a gateway for markets in rich western Europe. However, this has now fallen victim to the Ukraine war which has strained ties between China and many of the Eastern European countries which are backing Ukraine. In all fairness the CEE had begun to pall even before the invasion of Ukraine as the countries realised that despite promises, the Chinese remained focused on western Europe.

Europe itself figures large in Beijing's world view. Among the key Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects have been railways linking China to Europe via Central Asia. With the help of high-speed trains, the Chinese aim is to crunch the overland distance between themselves and prosperous Europe, which they see as a market for their increasingly sophisticated products.

Given the global developments, Mr. Xi's visit can be seen as a defensive one, aimed at preserving Chinese interests in Europe in the face of adverse geopolitics. But visits to Hungary and Serbia, though high on the friendship front, are not likely to break much ice with the rest of Europe which is increasingly sceptical of China.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ECI's appeal

The Election Commission of India (ECI) asking political parties, in particular the two national parties, to desist from raising divisive issues has come a bit too late. With the election almost nearing to an end, the important guideline would not meet its true objective and purpose.

Most politicians and parties are seasoned campaigners, the moral code of conduct notwithstanding, but one wonders whether this has been adhered to this time. There has been mudslinging and blame games, with each side believing itself to be a paragon. The ECI has a major role to play in conducting polls the proper way. With all the machinery and with the powers that are bestowed on it, cannot the ECI have done better?

Balasubramaniam Pavani,
Secunderabad

Recognising Palestine

We are long past the gory wars of the Middle Ages and even the conflicts in Korea or Vietnam that bordered on human savagery. Yet, in the ongoing conflict in Gaza, the horrors are being reenacted. Proportionate response in hostilities is fair and revenge understandable, but bloodlust does no credit to humankind in this day and age. The attempt at a merciless annihilation of Palestine by Israel has at last managed to kindle human sensitivity. The move by Spain, Norway and Ireland to recognise Palestine as a state i acknowledges that it has a right to sovereignty as any other nation. Nations must endorse this movement to enable the restoration of peace in this region.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

It is in the spirit of ending the long-drawn battle between Israel and Palestine for peace to exist in West Asia that Ireland, Norway and Spain have formally decided to recognise the state of Palestine.

This is a good gesture for others to follow.

The U.S. should cease interventions in the crisis-ridden countries in West Asia and focus on restoring peace.

Reshaping its foreign policies towards the new world order is the dire need. The U.S. should venture to do this in the light of the havoc it creates by its mindless interventions.

N. Visveswaran,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Should doctors be kept out of the Consumer Protection Act?

PARLEY

Rajeshwari Sekar

is a medico-legal expert in Chennai with over 18 years of experience handling consumer court cases and medical cases

Saroja Sundaram

is the executive director of the Chennai-based Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group

Earlier this month, the Supreme Court ruled that advocates cannot be held liable under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, for deficiency in service. The Court also indicated that its 1995 decision that held medical professionals accountable under the Act may need to be revisited. It suggested that the definition of the term 'services' under the Act, which includes the medical sector, be re-examined. The issue will be placed before a larger Bench. Should doctors, like lawyers, be kept out of the Consumer Protection Act? Rajeshwari Sekar and Saroja Sundaram discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Aroon Deep**. Edited excerpts:

Is it appropriate for patients to take recourse to the Consumer Protection Act?

Rajeshwari Sekar: It is a welcome decision by the Supreme Court to revisit the facts of the 1995 case; it will give a better explanation for the word 'service'. *Indian Medical Association v. V.P. Shantha* was a landmark case which decided that doctors, medical professionals, and hospitals do come under the Consumer Protection Act as service providers. Doctors are highly qualified professionals who provide a service to the people. They are highly specialised. This cannot be equated with any other [profession] because human bodies react differently in different situations. A lot of work and research goes into medical practice. Many surgeries are high tech. Patients have to be carefully taken care of.

But there are people who misuse the Act. They don't want to pay the doctor's fee or the hospital fee. They create a ruckus and file a case under the Consumer Protection Act. This turns into a harrowing experience for doctors and hospitals. When things go well, a patient is happy, but when things go wrong, the patient blames the doctor and the hospital. This is dangerous. Doctors order a bunch of medical tests to protect themselves against these complaints. And that increases the cost of procedures. Everything has to be on record, so that if there is a dispute, they can prove that they were correct in doing whatever they did.

Saroja Sundaram: I think it is appropriate for patients to take recourse under the Consumer Protection Act because without the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions, the affected patients will not have an effective adjudicating body to get their grievances redressed. The Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, may define misconduct and take action on erring doctors, but how will it benefit the affected patient or family? I don't think the National Medical Council has the powers to award compensation to patients for the injuries they sustained. There may be provisions in civil and criminal law, but criminal law may be brought into effect only in case of death of patients. We all know that while there is a remedy available in civil law, it is a long-winded trial with elaborate rules of procedure, fees, and delays. This deters an aggrieved patient or family from approaching courts. The Consumer Protection Act is a benevolent legislation enacted with the main objective of protecting the rights of consumers, and we all know who a consumer is. When a person buys a product or a service for a consideration, they are a consumer as defined under the Act. As for the medical profession, it is not a business per se, but a service rendered that is often associated with a cost.

The judgment in the V.*P. Shantha* case clearly explained the relationship between a doctor and patient as a contract for service and said that it (the medical service) would come within the purview of the Act. I think this judgment should stand good because it benefits the affected consumers, who are the affected patients. Otherwise, where will patients seek solace?

An operation theatre. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

What are the problems and opportunities in using the Consumer Protection Act as the pathway for patients to challenge adverse outcomes?

RS: In some cases, we find there is gross negligence [on the medical professionals' part]. In such cases, following the legal process is okay. But what about people who have done a good job and yet a shadow of doubt is cast on them? Patients go to court and file a case, then they go to the district forum, then to the State Commission on appeal, and then to the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. It takes 10 harrowing years to prove that you are innocent. It's an experience that really takes the spirit out of doctors. The doctor is rendering a service. He is highly qualified, just like an advocate. He is ready to help the patient. But these are the problems – delays and frivolous litigation. And there are people who just don't want to pay doctors, so they come up with some case to cause trouble. It takes a toll on doctors.

If doctors' associations themselves have an authority who can view these cases with expert medical knowledge and act, that would be sensible, instead of a person approaching the court and going the long way. The courts cannot decide by themselves anyway; they have to get an expert opinion from a group of doctors. So, that can be avoided.

> Action against malpractice is one thing, but to compensate an aggrieved consumer is another. As we have an ombudsman for the insurance, banking, and electricity sectors, maybe we should have an independent authority to deal with these issues in the medical sector too.
>
> SAROJA SUNDARAM

SS: I think largely it [the 1995 judgment and the Consumer Protection Act] gives an opportunity for patients to challenge malpractice and seek redressal. The remedies provided under the Act are quite advantageous to the patient. In all these years I don't think we will be able to point out any case of an unfair or incongruous judgment rendered by the redressal agencies under the Act. Expert opinion is sought if the issue is complex; only then are cases decided.

As for consumers, I think it is time to do a study to see how many frivolous cases have been filed over the years. In most cases it would be a genuine case of malpractice, or the patient or the family would have been made to strongly believe that they were wronged by the doctor. Non-provision of adequate information on time is one of the main reasons for this. The delay in consumer commissions is an issue that needs to be dealt with definitely because 10-12 years of delay in handling cases undermines the objective of the Act, which is to provide speedy redressal to complaints.

What would an alternative mechanism look like if consumer forums are deemed to be an inappropriate way of dealing with medical complaints?

SS: Action against malpractice is one thing, but to compensate an aggrieved consumer is another. As we have an ombudsman for the insurance, banking, and electricity sectors, maybe [we should have] an independent authority to deal with these issues as a first step. The consumer should always have the option to file a case before the consumer courts. But as a first redress, we could have a body where the matter could be taken to first. Similarly, we have the option of mediation under the Consumer Protection Act. As of now, medical negligence is not covered under it. That is something we could work on.

Do grievance redressal forums actually draw a distinction between explicit malpractice and adverse outcomes that follow a risk that was present in some way or the other? How can physicians safeguard themselves against litigation in cases where they genuinely did everything that they could to prevent a specific outcome?

RS: What is needed is a very strong regulatory authority which can monitor medical professionals' activity, but they should also have powers to control what is happening.

There is medical indemnity insurance that a lot of doctors subscribe to in order to be safe if they get into any problem. But it is a difficult process if they have to go to court regardless.

SS: If you go through the judgments, there are several which have been decided against the consumers as well. It's not like every doctor is framed and that every case fought ends up in favour of the consumer. The Commissions have handled the cases quite diligently, I would say.

Diligent service delivery, maintaining proper records about the patient's history, taking proper consent for treatment will safeguard a doctor's interest. Following the checklist protocols required for maintaining proper medical records is important. Communicating clearly about the risks [before procedures or treatment] and outcome of the procedure/treatment, and timely referral of the patient in case of complications help physicians safeguard themselves against such litigation.

To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

NOTEBOOK

Fear gives way to election fervour

While violence and fear marred elections in Kashmir earlier, this time the region recorded a relatively high turnout as well as many firsts

Peerzada Ashiq

In the last 34 years, parliamentary elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) have been a battleground for mainstream political parties and separatists espousing ideologies ranging from Kashmir's independence to accession to Pakistan. This year, for the first time in my journalistic career, I covered an electoral battle limited to the mainstream parties, with some championing the cause of semi-autonomous status for J&K and others for a complete integration with the Union of India. This is an unprecedented leap in the electoral dynamics of the region after the erstwhile State of J&K was stripped of special status and reduced to two Union Territories in 2019.

In 1999, I was a cub reporter with a local daily in Srinagar. Kashmir was in the throes of violence. Omnipresent militants kept security forces on their toes. As reporters, we had to prepare for days to cover the general election. We had to get special passes and plan to report from spots that ensured the least possibility of militant violence or street protests. The fear of being hit by stones on the street or even grenades near polling booths kept us on edge, especially on polling day.

The stage was set for elections in September-October. Most of the militant outfits and separatist groups had called for a poll boycott in all the three parliamentary seats of Kashmir Valley – Anantnag, Baramulla, and Srinagar. They described their decision as "a democratic way to reject India's rule in Kashmir and a means to seek international attention" to the Kashmir issue. The run-up to the polls were marred by attacks on security forces and workers of parties. 'Fidayeen' or suicide attacks by militants began in Kashmir. I could gauge the fear from the fact that very few rallies were held, and only under multi-tier security arrangements. Many areas such as Srinagar's old city and Baramulla's Old Town were no-go zones for mainstream leaders for electioneering. Angry local youth would throw stones at these leaders if they attempted to hold rallies in these areas.

On polling day, bullet-proof vehicles or long columns of security forces could be seen on every lane. There were hardly any voters. In fact, no voter liked to be identified. Protesters checked locals for indelible ink and punished them on finding it. Many voters' houses were stoned at night. Reporters could only speak to voters whose faces were covered. Locals referred to the voters as "*ghadar* (traitors)". Srinagar recorded a voter turnout of 11.8% and Baramulla, 27.8% that year.

Cut to 25 years later. The scene has completely changed. The two regions recorded a turnout of 38% and 59%, respectively. The National Conference vice president, who is a candidate from the Baramulla seat, made his maiden poll speech in his 25-year-long political career in Srinagar's old city. The poll venue was less than 1 km away from the plaque bearing the names of more than 30 civilians who died in firing by security forces on May 21, 1990, when they were carrying the body of assassinated separatist leader Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq for burial. The Peoples Democratic Party president, who is a candidate from the Anantnag seat, addressed a rally in Srinagar's old city, a stone's throw from the house of Mohammad Abdullah Bangroo, one of the founding members of the Hizbul Mujahideen. Rallies during the late evening and door-to-door campaigns were held for the first time in the most volatile pockets of south Kashmir. Parties hired lyricists and singers to increase their poll pitch.

On polling day, stone-pelters, militants' families, and hardline cadres of the Jamaat-e-Islami, which was banned in 2019, stood in queue along with others who had boycotted elections in the past, at polling booths in Srinagar and Baramulla. Pockets of Pulwama and Sopore, which once recorded the highest number of militant recruits, led the change. In Sopore, the voter turnout was 44% compared to the less than 4% in the past. Outside polling booths, people debated Article 370, jobs, mining rights and harsh police verifications. I saw voters with varied ideologies for the first time. Indeed, this was the first election where ideology, and not *sadak, bilji, pani* (road, electricity, water), dominated the campaign.

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Love and duty

Lozbang Sherab, 75, head of the family feeding his ailing wife Pustong Lamo, 85, before they went out to cast their vote in Warshi village, which is home to just one family and five eligible voters, in Ladakh. REUTERS

FROM THE ARCHIVES The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 24, 1974

Special drive to move fertilizers by rail

New Delhi, May 23: A Railway Ministry spokesman claimed to-day that during the fortnight since the strike began, Railways had been regularly loading and moving imported foodgrains from all the major ports at near normal level.

On an average, the Railways have loaded daily 135 foodgrain wagons from Madras port, about 100 wagons from the Visakhapatnam port, and about 180 wagons from the Bombay port.

From the minor ports in South India, movement of imported foodgrains for local areas was also arranged regularly.

The spokesman said, as the situation improved a week ago, the Railways instituted a special drive to move fertilizers, besides foodgrains from all major ports in the country. A programme for dispatches on an urgent basis was also drawn up in consultation with the concerned Ministries. Loading of petroleum products from all the refineries was also maintained at the normal level.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 24, 1924

Empire day in London

London, May 24: United Empire was the theme of the speeches at the Empire Day dinner under the auspices of the Colonial Institute this evening when the Duke of Connaught presided over a distinguished company of 400 including the Duke of York, Sir Joseph Cook, Sir Hugh Clifford, Sir James Allen and Sir Gordon Guggisberg. Mr. Thomas, proposing the principal toast, appealed to his bearers to drop the miserable class warfare and class talk. (Cheers). Let all, no matter of what class or creed, unite in making the Empire worthy of the sacrifices of those of all classes who defended the Empire in war.

From Page One

Karnataka renews call to cancel Prajwal passport

"Therefore, I urge you to kindly consider this matter with utmost seriousness, take prompt and necessary actions to cancel the diplomatic passport of Mr. Prajwal Revanna under Section 10 (3)(h) of the Passport Act of 1967 or under any other relevant law and secure his return to the country in the interest of the public," he added.

'Judicial order required'

The Ministry had earlier informed that a passport could be revoked if a requisite judicial order was obtained in this regard from a court.

"As far as the matter of revoking a diplomatic passport of a person is concerned, it comes under the Passport Act of 1967. And as per its provisions, a direction should come from the court. Only then it can be revoked," Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on May 2 during an official briefing regarding the matter.

Violence in Bengal over death of BJP supporter

The villagers blocked roads by felling trees and prevented the police from entering the violence-affected areas.

The police used force and resorted to baton charge to disburse the protesters.

While the Trinamool leadership claimed that Ms. Arhi's death was the result of a faction feud between the old BJP and new BJP, family members of the deceased claimed that it was a political murder.

"Our brother-in-law was in Trinamool but later shifted to BJP. The Trinamool people were angry as to why he was working for BJP," the daughter-in-law of the deceased said.

Trinamool spokesperson Santanu Sen called the incident a "reflection of the BJP's internal feud between the party's old-timers and its new recruits in Nandigram".

Suvendu's charge

BJP leader and Nandigram MLA Suvendu Adhikari said that the violence was the result of incitement by Trinamool general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, who addressed a public meeting in the area on Wednesday.

"The bloodshed was a direct fallout of *Bhaipo*'s [nephew] provocation in Nandigram yesterday [on Wednesday]. The barbaric murder was orchestrated by the Trinamool after realising its certain defeat. The hands of the *jihadis* do not tremble before hacking a woman to death," Mr. Adhikari posted on social media.

The BJP leader, who visited the local police station, alleged that the police officers held a meeting with an accused Trinamool leader right there in the station.

The Leader of the Opposition was heard exhorting Central police forces to take action against those responsible for the violence in the State on Wednesday.

In the 2021 Assembly polls, Mr. Adhikari defeated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee from Nandigram by a margin of 1,956 votes. Nandigram is considered a stronghold of Mr. Adhikari.

Nandigram falls under the Tamluk Lok Sabha constituency, which is witnessing a contest between the BJP's Abhijit Gangopadhyay and the Trinamool Congress's Debangshu Bhattacharya.

The violence brought back memories of the 2007 agitation against forcible land acquisition where the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Trinamool were at the loggerheads.

Four booked for beating up Dalit groom in Gwalior

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Four people have been booked for allegedly beating up a Dalit groom during a wedding procession that passed by the houses of the "upper caste" accused in Gwalior district, the police said on Thursday.

According to the police, the incident took place at around 11 p.m. on May 20 when the wedding procession of one Naresh Jatav was being taken out in Gwalior's Rithodan village. The accused were identified as Sanjay Rawat, Dalbir Rawat, Sandeep Rawat, and Anil Rawat.

Relatives of the groom said the accused had hurled caste slurs at them. The police said the clash broke out after the currency notes being showered on the groom fell on some women related to the accused. A case was registered under Sections of the IPC and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Congress slams EC for failing to fulfil 'constitutional duty'

Party spokesperson Singhvi accuses the poll panel of trying to be 'election department' of BJP, says it is creating 'false equivalences' by issuing generalised directions to the political parties

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday slammed the Election Commission (EC) for advising Opposition leaders that they should refrain from saying the Constitution is in danger as well as over its affidavit in the Supreme Court with regard to disclosing voter data on its website.

Addressing a press conference, Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi criticised the EC's argument that data contained in Form 17C can be morphed or distorted if it were uploaded on its website. He said it was condemnable that the EC was not fulfilling its constitutional duty and its inclination was "one-sided".

Mr. Singhvi also accused the EC of trying to be "the election department" of the BJP by not acting on complaints of model code violations by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Instead, he said, the EC was creating "false equivalences" by giving generalised directions to parties.

> The EC is as much on trial as the political parties we oppose. The parties can fail the trial but the EC cannot afford to fail the trial.
>
> **ABHISHEK SINGHVI**
> Congress spokesperson

His comments came after the EC gave an affidavit in the Supreme Court, saying "indiscriminate disclosure" of polling station-wise voter-turnout data and posting the figures on its website would cause chaos in the election machinery.

Mr. Singhvi said the EC's actions on complaints against the BJP top brass and in the non-disclosure of voter data did not befit a high-level constitutional institution. "This is against the constitutional responsibilities of the institution. This is the EC, not the election agent of any party. When a constitutional institution shows inclination towards power, then it should be understood that this is the end of democracy," he said.

Raising the poll panel's instructions that one could not raise questions on the Constitution, Mr. Singhvi asserted, "We are openly saying that unless there is a violation of the code of conduct, the EC does not have the right to decide who will say what."

"Today, the identity of India, the thinking of India, the basic structure of the Constitution is in danger. This is very unfortunate," he added.

The Congress spokesperson also questioned the purpose of "hiding" Form 17C, which was meant to increase the faith of the public in the poll process.

"The EC is as much on trial as the political parties we oppose. The political parties can fail the trial but the EC cannot afford to fail the trial. The EC has not passed the high constitutional obligations and tests imposed upon it. It is time that the EC rose to the occasion and dealt with these issues on a constitutional basis. It has voted for concealment instead of transparency," he alleged.

Three SDRF men drown in Maharashtra's Pravara river

The Hindu Bureau
PUNE

Three personnel of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) died after their boat capsized during a rescue attempt in the Pravara river in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district on Thursday. A fourth jawan is also feared drowned, said authorities.

The SDRF team from Dhule district was deployed on Wednesday to locate the bodies of two men who were feared drowned in the Pravara. While the body of one of the men was fished out, the search for the other person continued.

On Thursday, a boat carrying six SDRF men capsized. While Pankaj Pawar and Ashok Pawar were rescued, the bodies of Nama Shinde, Vaibhav Wagh and Rahul Pawra, who drowned, were retrieved.

The search is on to find the missing SDRF personnel, Arjun Jedgule, said authorities.

'Indian forces using Kuki and Myanmar groups to wage war'

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Indian armed forces were using a Kuki extremist outfit and a pro-democracy armed group in civil war-torn Myanmar to wage a war against the "Naga Army" along the India-Myanmar border, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) said on Thursday.

It said the National Investigation Agency, by alleging that the NSCN had been helping radical Meitei groups to fuel the year-old ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo groups in Manipur, was "spitting venom".

The NSCN said the Assam Rifles (AR) and the Indian Army's para regiment were using the Kuki National Army (Burma), or KNA(B), and the People's Defence Force (PDF) for a proxy war to kill the Council's members. This was a deliberate attempt to drag the NSCN into a conflict it had steered clear of while pursuing a political settlement to the 'Naga political issue' with the Government of India, the outfit said.

The KNA(B) had a Manipur-based wing called the KNA. The PDF was the armed wing of the exiled National Unity Government that was fighting the Tatmadaw or Myanmar military, which staged a coup on February 1, 2021.

"It is a matter of regret that the AR and the para regiment are openly standing out to collude with Kuki militant groups against the NSCN, creating a war-like scenario in the border areas of India and Myanmar. No such war-mongering situation was witnessed in recent history despite the area (being) prone to infiltration by different militant groups," the NSCN said.

Eight killed, over 50 injured in boiler blast at Dombivli chemical plant

Snehal Mutha
MUMBAI

Eight people were killed and over 50 injured in a boiler explosion at a chemical plant in the Dombivli Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) area, 40 km from Mumbai, on Thursday.

Fire and Rescue Services officials said the explosion took place at the Amudan Chemical Company in Phase 2 of the MIDC, leading to a devastating fire around 1.40 p.m.

"The blast took place due to a technical issue in the reactor. It caused drums containing chemicals to explode, further damaging other units. In the impact, windowpanes of nearby houses and shops were shattered," Dombivli Chief Fire Officer Namdeo Chaudhary said.

As many as 22 fire engines and 16 tankers were brought in to control the blaze at the chemical factory in Dombivli. PTI

Personnel from the Fire and Rescue Services, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Target Disaster Response Force (TDRF), and doctors have been deployed at the site.

While those injured in the blast were taken to the nearest hospitals, a few workers were still stuck inside the unit and the rescuers have been unable to locate them.

Ravi Kumar, who was near the spot when the explosion took place, said local people had constantly demanded that such industries be relocated. "The residential areas are around 200 m from the MIDC and around 400 companies and mills operate in the area," he said.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde announced a compensation of ₹5 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased and treatment expenses for the injured.

Police enter AIIMS ward in SUV to arrest accused

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Uttarakhand Police drove an SUV through an emergency ward, up to the sixth floor, of the AIIMS in Rishikesh to arrest a staffer accused of sexual harassment. The car, trundling through the ward, shocked patients and attendants.

In a 26-second clip recorded on Wednesday, security officials can be seen clearing the way for the car. The police said a nursing officer had allegedly sexually harassed a woman doctor inside an operation theatre at the AIIMS. The accused, Satish Kumar, was suspended but he got admitted to the psychiatric ward in the hospital.

The police said they had taken the car inside to safely bring out the accused as there was tension on the premises. AIIMS Director Meenu Singh said it was "an emergency measure".

Seven Naxals killed in encounter in Chhattisgarh

The Hindu Bureau
RAIPUR

At least seven alleged Naxalites were killed in an encounter with the security forces along the boundary of Narayanpur and Bijapur districts in Chhattisgarh on Thursday.

According to the police, the encounter began around 11 a.m. when a security team was conducting a search for the Indravati area committee members of Maoists on the inter-State boundary and was fired upon by the Maoists. The police had received information about the presence of the Maoists in that area and a joint team comprising the Bastar Fighters and the District Reserve Guards (DRG) along with teams of Special Task Force (STF) was conducting the search.

The security forces responded, and the bodies of seven uniformed Naxalites were recovered, a police statement said.

Military Affairs Department seeks feedback from three services on Agnipath scheme

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

As the Agnipath scheme for the recruitment of soldiers into the three Services completes two years, the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), headed by the Chief of Defence Staff, has sought feedback from the forces on the scheme.

A meeting was held in this regard on Wednesday where the progress was reviewed at the highest level, it has been learnt.

Monthly reports are being regularly sent by the units, formations, and regimental centres to the Army headquarters with marks, a source said. "Feedback is received from all units, compiled at various formations and sent to headquarters, along with an averaged-out quantified feedback. Marks are given out of 10 on various attributes," the source said.

On June 14, 2022, the government announced the Agnipath scheme for recruitment of soldiers into the armed forces for four years, doing away with the earlier process. The overall intake has been capped at 1.75 lakh till 2026, and Agniveers on completion of four years will get an opportunity to join regular cadre and up to 25% would be selected through another recruitment process.

A recent meeting reportedly reviewed the scheme's progress at the highest level.

The Agnipath scheme has become a major poll issue in the Lok Sabha election, with the Congress pledging to abolish the scheme and revert to the earlier manner of permanent recruitment if voted to power.

Speaking at an event in March, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh defended the scheme and said the future of youth joining as Agniveers would not be impacted. He added that the government was "open" to bringing any changes in the scheme "if required".

To questions on the issue, an official source said the Army conducted regular reviews to ensure the efficacy and currency of its policies on human resources. Terming the scheme "transformational", the source added that regular feedback was obtained periodically to ensure error-free implementation of the scheme.

The Navy and the Air Force have already compiled the feedback which is ready to be sent to the DMA, sources confirmed.

Being rich no excuse to skirt rural medical service: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Justice P.S. Narasimha said travelling in and serving rural India was a beautiful experience, and being rich enough to pay through a private medical school was no excuse to skirt public service.

Justice Narasimha made the observation while hearing a plea assailing a Karnataka government notification requiring medical students to complete a year's compulsory public rural service before registering with the Karnataka Medical Council. He asked whether "people in private institutions" owed no responsibility towards nation-building.

The petition had argued that medical candidates enrolled in private institutions constitute an intelligible differentia under Article 14 of the Constitution and should not be subjected to compulsory service.

Rope in NDRF, ITBP to manage Char Dham crowd, Centre tells Uttarakhand

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

With an unprecedented number of pilgrims visiting the Char Dham temples in Uttarakhand, and videos of chaos and mismanagement going viral on social media, the Home Ministry reviewed the yatra arrangements on Thursday.

Around 9.5 lakh people visited the four temples of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri in the past 14 days.

The Uttarakhand government has spoken to the governments of five States from where the turnout of devotees was the highest, and requested them not to let unregistered pilgrims undertake the yatra. Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Radha Raturi said the highest number of devotees came from nine States – Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, Haryana, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Delhi.

Call for caution: The Kedarnath temple premises filled to the brim with devotees on the Char Dham Yatra. PTI

The State Tourism Department has a dedicated website for Char Dham yatra registration. In view of the crowd, offline registration has been banned till May 31.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla has instructed Ms. Raturi to send daily reports of pilgrims at the Char Dham temples, yatra routes and halting places to the Home Ministry. It also asked the State to take the help of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) for crowd management.

Earlier this week, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had directed officials to analyse the shortcomings in the yatra arrangements and submit a report. His order came after several videos of chaotic scenes around the temples went viral.

ELECTIONS 2024

INDIA bloc will ensure farm loan waivers: Jairam

The Congress on Thursday said that the Modi government had waived bank loans worth ₹16 lakh crore of its "crony capitalist friends" but not of farmers. It said that if voted to power the INDIA bloc will create a permanent commission to ensure such waivers for farmers.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that in 2008, the UPA government led by Manmohan Singh waived agricultural loans worth ₹72,000 crore which benefited a large number of farmers.

"On June 4, when the INDIA bloc comes to power, we guarantee to create a permanent farm loan waiver commission, which will ensure farm loan waiver in every State. We have fulfilled our promises earlier also, we are saying that we will do it again," Mr. Ramesh said. PTI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh at a press conference in New Delhi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

11 LS candidates are over 80 years of age, says ADR

Eleven candidates older than 80 and 537 in the 25-30 age range are contesting the Lok Sabha election, according to an analysis of election data gathered by the poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The analysis looked at data of 8,337 of the 8,360 candidates contesting the Lok Sabha elections.

In the sixth phase, which will be held on May 25, there are 271 candidates in the 25-40 age group, while 436 are in the 41-60 age range.

There are 159 candidates in the 61-80 group.

For the final phase of election on June 1, 243 candidates are in the 25-40 age bracket, 481 in the 41-60 range, and 177 aged between 61 and 80.

Three candidates are more than 80 years old. PTI

"I had said BJP is heading to lose all seats [in Uttar Pradesh], except the PM's [Varanasi seat]. But it seems that is also slipping out of their hands

AKHILESH YADAV
Samajwadi Party chief

BJP will win all seven seats in Delhi: Piyush

Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said that the BJP would win all seven seats in Delhi, which will go to the polls on Saturday. He also said that the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc was a failure as it does not have a leader. PTI

"...The fight is for safeguarding the Constitution. It is not simply a book, our Constitution carries thousands of years of ideological heritage

RAHUL GANDHI
Congress leader

Prestige battle: PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, who is contesting the polls from the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, taking part in a roadshow. NISSAR AHMAD

In Anantnag, BJP, though not in fray, looks to defeat PDP, NC

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

A lot is at stake for former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti and the BJP, which is not contesting elections formally, in the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency, where polls will be held on Saturday. For Ms. Mufti, the upcoming Assembly election prospects solely depend on the performance in this constituency, while the BJP is backing newly formed parties with the intention to blow the bugle of its arrival in the Kashmir Valley, for the first time since 1947.

All the key political parties among 20 contestants, which include the PDP, the National Conference (NC), the J&K Apni Party (JKAP) and the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP), have been canvassing across one of the most geographically arduous constituency, with the Rajouri-Poonch belt on one side of the mighty mountain ranges of the Pir Panjal and the Anantnag-Kulgam-Shopian belt on the other.

The Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission stitched together geographically and demographically two distinct regions as one Lok Sabha constituency in 2022. It recast the whole constituency, with 7,35,551 voters, mainly Gujjar, Bakerwal and Pahari sections, from Rajouri and Poonch being added to the constituency that once was dominated by the Kashmiri-speaking population. The BJP is banking on Paharis, a mixed community of Hindus and Muslims, which was granted the Schedule Tribe status, to ensure that a party-backed candidate wins the election.

In fact, the Election Commission's move to defer elections here from May 7 to 25 due to weather conditions and bad roads earlier has allowed the BJP to formally join the campaign, with senior leaders camping in Rajouri and Poonch. BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh, along with BJP State president Ravinder Raina and party general secretary and Anantnag-Rajouri in-charge Vibodh Gupta, in a series of meetings, asked their cadre and supporters to vote for a party that has potential to defeat the parties of the Abdullahs and the Muftis. It is Ghulam Nabi Azad's DPAP and Altaf Bukhari's JKAP that have emerged as anti-Mufti and anti-Abdullah political forces in the constituency.

"It was a plot to delay elections. The Anantnag election was kept in the sixth phase so that the Home Minister could meet officials here and damage the prospects of NC candidate Mian Altaf," NC vice-president Omar Abdullah said.

The BJP intends to exploit the demographic edge of tribal people in the constituency to ensure the PDP and the NC lose. However, Ms. Mufti and her daughter Iltija Mufti have matched the BJP's campaign in Rajouri and Poonch. They managed to pull tribal people to their poll rallies. "We need a strong voice in Parliament to raise all the issues facing Paharis and Gujjars," Ms. Mufti said.

The NC, which is a member of the INDIA bloc, has put its best foot forward. The NC candidate is a Gujjar cleric and belongs to a family of caretakers of a shrine in central Kashmir's Kangan area, which has been a religious centre for the Gujjars for centuries.

'Modi's low-level attack on Congress is a sign that he knows he is losing the polls'

The PM is banking on polarisation and division of the people of the country, says the Congress general secretary (organisation); he says the Congress has conceded many seats to its INDIA allies to ensure the BJP government is removed and the 'anarchy of misgovernance and dictatorship' is ended

INTERVIEW

K.C. Venugopal

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal, a key strategist of the party, said that after five phases of polling, feedback from the ground indicates that the INDIA bloc will form the government. Edited excerpts.

What is your assessment of the election after five phases of polling?

The reports from the field are very clear that after five phases of election, we are very comfortable to form a government. The INDIA alliance can form the government. We are very confident that we will get at least 300 seats. Whenever a phase of the election gets over, we have reports from the ground on which are the seats we are winning and on the basis of that, we are very comfortable.

Which are the States where the Congress or the Opposition bloc is doing well?

We are winning the entire South hands down. In the northeast, our position will be better than the last time. Then Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), BJP seats are going to be considerably down. The BJP (earlier) got the most seats in the Hindi belt; in Rajasthan and Haryana, we had zero seats. In U.P., we had only one seat. That entire scenario is going to get changed.

The Congress campaign has largely focussed on livelihood issues like inflation, unemployment and the 25 guarantees. Are these powerful enough to win you the election?

You know that Rahul Gandhi *ji* has started the Bharat Jodo Yatra, walking more than 4,000 km. During the yatra, he interacted with a lot of people, including youngsters, women, farmers and those from all walks of life. We got an idea that at present, unemployment is the most important issue. Price rise and women's safety are among the biggest issues. Farmers' agitation was very much going on at that time. We decided to focus on these people's issues for electioneering. What a good experience in Karnataka and Telangana. We not only focussed on these issues but at the same time we exposed the failures of the Union government, the performance card of the Narendra Modi government in the past 10 years. They have not done much but they are trying to divide the people on religion and other issues.

SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

A core theme of your campaign is that the BJP wants 400-plus seats to amend the Constitution and end reservation. The Prime Minister countered this by saying these many seats are needed to stop the Congress from giving away reservation only to Muslims. He also said if the INDIA bloc comes to power, they would run a bulldozer over Ram Mandir. So, it's a very sharp attack on the Congress.

It's not a sharp attack but a dirty attack. And that too from the level of the Prime Minister. Everybody knows the reality of this country. He is banking on only two or three weapons. It is a low-level attack to divide the people of this country. But that is not working so far.

People are now realising that whenever elections come, Modi *ji* will use these type of weapons. And the point of changing the Constitution, do you think we have taken it just like that? Their own MPs and candidates talked about needing 400 seats to change the Constitution. My point is that the Prime Minister is doing this low level of attack against the Congress because he is getting clear indication that he is going to lose. So, finally, there is only one agenda: Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Muslim and polarise.

The Congress is contesting only 328 out of the 543 Lok Sabha seats. Is it over-reliance on your allies or are you under-confident of your performance?

No, actually, the Congress has sacrificed a lot. Our main motto is to reduce the number of seats of the BJP. For example, in Maharashtra, we are contesting only 16 or 17 seats out of 48. Even the party unit found it difficult to digest. But our leadership clarified that this anarchy of misgovernance, dictatorship, misusing power must end. There is no level playing field for the election now. We have to understand that the main job of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is to chase the Opposition leaders and put them in jail. The neutrality of the Election Commission has totally disappeared and they are acting like a wing of the BJP. We never expected this from a body like the EC. Therefore, the thinking in the leadership of the Congress party is that we have to remove this government for the future of this country and the future of democracy. That is why we have sacrificed so many seats and are contesting only 328 seats.

Mr. Modi has also said that if the INDIA bloc comes to power, there will be five Prime Ministers in five years.

There are realities in this country before you like the 2004 and 2009 elections. In 2004, the Congress had less seats comparatively but Dr. Manmohan Singh became the most successful Prime Minister and he got another mandate. After the elections, we will form the government and decide our Prime Minister within 24 hours. The INDIA parties will sit together and decide its Prime Ministerial candidate.

Voting for 58 seats tomorrow; 28 States, Union Territories to complete polling with Phase 6

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Campaigning for the penultimate phase of the Lok Sabha election ended on Thursday with the BJP and the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc moving to post-poll arithmetic.

At a rally in Mahendragarh in Haryana, where all 10 constituencies will vote on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the INDIA bloc was talking about having five Prime Ministers over the next five years and the fight over ghee had broken out in the alliance even before the cow had given milk.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the INDIA bloc would stop the BJP from coming back to power and get the required numbers to form the government.

The sixth phase will see 889 candidates trying their luck from 58 seats. With this phase, the polling process in 28 States and Union Territories will be completed. Star campaigners of all parties also arrived at the the national capital, which will see all of its seven Lok Sabha constituencies voting on Saturday. The BJP had won all the seats here in 2019.

Final flourishes: Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated with a sword by the BJP's Patiala candidate, Preneet Kaur, at a campaign rally on Thursday, and, right, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee with party candidate Sayantika Banerjee in Kolkata. ANI, PTI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on May 21 that the BJP was set to lose power on June 4, when results for the Lok Sabha elections would be announced.

He rephrased Mr. Modi's "*Achhe din aane wale hain*" pitch by adding his own spin – "*Modiji jaane wale hain*" – to it. Campaigning on the streets of the national capital, he said an INDIA bloc government was set to be formed at the Centre following which the capital would get full Statehood.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was, however, targeted repeatedly over the incident of alleged assault on its Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal.

On Thursday, Mr. Kejriwal said that the Prime Minister was trying to harass his old and sick parents by questioning them in the Maliwal case. The allegation followed the Delhi police's scheduled interrogation of Mr. Kejriwal's parents which was, however, postponed.

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, in a video message, appealed to the people of Delhi to make candidates of the INDIA bloc victorious in all seven seats.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi campaigned for his party candidates and alliance partner AAP in the capital. On Thursday, he took a Metro ride and addressed rallies in support of the Congress candidate from northeast Delhi, Kanhaiya Kumar.

At a rally in Chandigarh on May 21, Mr. Gandhi said the system was heavily aligned against the lower castes. He said 90% of the population of the country, including Dalits, OBCs, tribal communities and minorities, did not have representation in the power structure.

In West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, speaking at a rally in Khardah on May 22, said she would not accept the Calcutta High Court order scrapping the Other Backward Class (OBC) status of several classes in the State. She hinted that the government could challenge the order in the Supreme Court.

A total of eight seats in the State will vote in the sixth phase.

I am being unjustly targeted: Jayant Sinha

The Hindu Bureau
SASARAM

Senior BJP leader and Hazaribagh MP Jayant Sinha on Thursday responded to the show-cause notice issued to him by the party and alleged that he was being unjustly targeted.

On Tuesday, the party had issued a notice asking Mr. Sinha why he stayed away from the election campaign for BJP candidate Manish Jaiswal and did not vote on May 20.

In the response letter which he posted on the social media platform X, Mr. Sinha said that he was surprised to receive the letter through the media. He said he had already requested party president J.P. Nadda to relieve him from electoral duties.

He also said that he has exercised his franchise through postal ballot.

"Given my contribution to the party and the circumstances, the public issuance of your letter is unseemly. Additionally, despite my loyalty and hard work for the party, it appears that I am being unjustly targeted," he said.

INBRIEF

Mumbai girl is the youngest Indian to scale Everest

A 16-year-old girl became India's youngest and world's second youngest to scale Mount Everest from the Nepal side. Kaamya Karthikeyan is a student of Navy Children School, Mumbai. She and her father, a naval officer Commander S. Karthikeyan, climbed Mt. Everest on Monday. "She has become the second youngest girl in the world and the youngest Indian Mountaineer to summit the world's highest peak from the Nepal side," shared Commander Mehul Karnik, Chief Public Relations Officer, Western Naval Command. She is a Class 12 student and aims to summit Mt. Vinson Massif in Antarctica this December to become the youngest girl to accomplish the seven summits challenge.

Outrage over custodial death of man in Assam's Lakhimpur

The Assam police suspended the in-charge of a police outpost in Assam after the custodial death of a 42-year-old man detained in a mobile phone theft case. Arsabh Ali from South Chandmari village in Lakhimpur district collapsed at the Khelmati police outpost on Thursday, hours after his detention. The news of his death sparked outrage with the villagers laying siege on the outpost before the authorities managed to pacify the crowd. Locals said the phone was stolen from Bormoria village and the deceased, a barely literate person, happened to purchase it. But the police suggested the man could have been a member of a mobile phone theft gang.

Bengal's most-deprived region Jangalmahal sees fierce battle

Eight seats in southwestern Bengal go to the polls tomorrow; stoppage of MGNREGS funds is a major poll issue in the region, which had seen Maoist violence in the past; former judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay is contesting the Tamluk seat

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Big fight: Supporters of the Trinamool Congress during a public meeting for the Lok Sabha election in Kolkata on Thursday; and (right) residents attending a public meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Jhargram district of West Bengal on Monday. PTI, ANI

Eight constituencies spread across five districts in the southwestern parts of West Bengal, including the coastal district of Purba Medinipur, go to the polls in the penultimate phase of the election on Saturday.

Southwestern Bengal, popularly known as the Jangalmahal region, witnessed large-scale violence between Communist Party of India (Maoist) cadre and security forces from 2007 to 2011. It is set for a direct contest between the Trinamool Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The region has been on the boil for the past few years owing to the Kurmi agitation, with the community listed in the Other Backward Class (OBC) category demanding inclusion on the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list. Leaders of the community have fielded Independent candidates for seats across the region.

One of the most deprived, the region faced stoppage of funds under the rural employment guarantee scheme (MGNREGS) for the past two years, resulting in economic distress. This emerged as a major poll issue. The constituencies are Purulia, Jhargram, Midnapore, Ghatal, Bankura, Bishnupur, Tamluk, and Kanthi.

While Purulia is up for a contest between sitting BJP MP Jyotirmoy Singh Mahato and Trinamool candidate Shantiram Mahato, Jhargram has seen both parties field new faces – Sahitya Akademi winner and Santali author Kalipada Soren pads up for Trinamool against the BJP's Pranat Tudu, a doctor. At Midnapore, the contest is between two actor-turned-politicians, the BJP's Aginimitra Paul and the Trinamool's June Mailah.

The adjoining Ghatal seat too sees prominent names of the Bengali film industry, Trinamool's Dipak Adhikari, alias Dev, and the BJP's Hiranmoy Chatterjee alias Hiran, cross swords. Mr. Dev has been representing the constituency since 2014 and Mr. Hiran is the MLA for Kharagpur Sadar.

At Bankura, BJP MP Subhas Sarkar, a doctor, is pitted against Trinamool leader and advocate Arup Chakraborty. The Bishnupur seat has already grabbed headlines as former spouses, BJP MP Saumitra Khan and Trinamool's Sujata Mondal, are locked in a heated battle. In the 2019 election, when a court had imposed restrictions on Mr. Khan campaigning in Bishnupur, it was Ms. Sujata who led the campaign. The couple divorced in February 2023.

The most interesting contest, however, is at Tamluk, where former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay is contesting on BJP ticket. Mr. Gangopadhyay has of late courted controversy for remarks directed at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, for which he had been censured by the Election Commission. He is contesting against Trinamool student leader Debangshu Bhattacharya.

Soumendu Adhikari, brother of BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari, is contesting from the adjoining seat of Kanthi and locks horns against Uttam Barik of the Trinamool. Both Tamluk and Kanthi seats have been held by members of the Adhikari family since 2009 and the election here is seen as a prestige battle for Mr. Suvendu.

Mr. Suvendu, who quit the Trinamool to join the BJP in 2020, holds considerable influence in the districts of Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram, and Purulia and it remains to be seen whether the BJP can hold its edge. Five of the eight seats – Purulia, Jhargram, Medinipur, Bankura and Bishnupur – were won by the BJP in 2019 while the Trinamool won Ghatal, Tamluk and Kanthi.

Police file FIR against Rohini Acharya for Saran violence

The Hindu Bureau
SASARAM

A first information report (FIR) was filed against Rohini Acharya, daughter of Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad and Saran candidate, on Thursday in the Saran post-poll violence case.

As many as 13 serious Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), including 307 (attempt to murder), have been slapped on her. In the Saran seat, Ms. Acharya is up against BJP candidate Rajiv Pratap Rudy. On May 20, she visited a booth to inspect the polling process, and got into an argument with the local people. The next day, workers of both the parties clashed, resulting in the death of a 25-year-old man, Chandan Yadav.

BJP worker Manoj Kumar, who is a representative of Mr. Rudy, had filed a complaint with the police alleging that Ms. Acharya, along with her seven supporters and 50 unidentified people, indulged in illegal activities in two booths in the Chapra Assembly segment on May 20.

The police have filed seven FIRs in the post-poll violence case and arrested two. A special investigation team is probing the case.

In Jharkhand, INDIA, NDA are locked in a straight fight for four high-profile seats in Phase 6 polling

Amit Bhelari
SASARAM

Last leg: Political workers during the Phase 6 Lok Sabha election campaign in Jharkhand. PTI

In the sixth phase of polling scheduled for Saturday, four high-profile seats held by the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) are at stake in Jharkhand. In the past two general elections, the BJP and its alliance partners had won in all these four Lok Sabha seats – Jamshedpur, Giridih, Ranchi and Dhanbad. The constituencies are spread across eight districts and comprise 24 Assembly segments.

Ranchi, considered the most prestigious seat as it is the State capital, has six Assembly segments – Silli, Khriji, Ranchi, Hatia and Kanke, and Ichagarh in Saraikela Kharsawan district. After the formation of Jharkhand in 2000, the first general election was held in 2004 when the government under then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was in power at the Centre. The BJP campaign around the "India shining" theme failed to win over voters here and Congress candidate Subodh Kant Sahay defeated sitting BJP MP Ram Tahal Choudhary by a margin of 15,421 votes as the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) formed the government at the Centre.

In 2009, Mr. Sahay repeated his performance and defeated Mr. Tahal, though by a narrow margin of 1,350 votes. However, in 2014, Mr. Tahal finally returned the favour by a huge margin of 1,99,303 votes and a share of 42.74% votes, as a "Modi wave" swept the region. In 2019, the BJP fielded a new candidate, Sanjay Seth, against Mr. Sahay and this time, the BJP candidate trounced him by an even bigger margin. Mr. Seth got 7,06,828 votes (57.21% vote share), while Mr. Sahay polled 4,23,802 votes (34.3%).

In 2024, the BJP has yet again put its trust on the sitting MP, and he is up against the Congress's Yashaswini Sahay, daughter of Mr. Sahay.

The importance of the seat could be understood from the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have held roadshows in Ranchi in support of the BJP candidate.

Jamshedpur is yet another important seat, which is unique in itself. Popularly known as the Steel City of India, it is the only Lok Sabha constituency in Jharkhand encompassing only one district (East Singhbhum). Out of the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies in Jharkhand, 13 are spread over two or three districts, with the lone exception of Jamshedpur. It has six Assembly seats – Baharagora, Ghatshila, Potka, Jugsalai, Jamshedpur East and Jamshedpur West. Jamshedpur East is held by Independent MLA Saryu Roy and the Congress's Banna Gupta holds Jamshedpur West, while the rest of the segments are held by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM).

Two-term BJP MP Bidyut Baran Mahato is looking forward to a record hattrick in Jamshedpur, boasting one of the oldest and largest steel plants. Mr. Mahato is locked in a direct contest against JMM candidate Samir Mohanty.

The BJP won this seat for the first time in 1996 with Nitish Bharadwaj, best known for playing Lord Krishna in the Mahabharata series, winning.

'Calcutta HC verdict exposed Opposition's vote bank politics'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Shivraj Singh Chouhan

A day after the Calcutta High Court invalidated the OBC certificates granted by the West Bengal government after 2010, the BJP on Thursday accused the INDIA bloc of indulging in appeasement politics.

The party said that the people of India would give a fitting reply to the Opposition's politics.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan flagged a statement by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee that her government would appeal the verdict, and said that the High Court's verdict was a "tight slap" on those pursuing vote bank politics.

"Appeasement is the dose and diet of parties like the Congress and Trinamool Congress. Without this, they cannot survive," he said. Mr Chouhan added that Ms. Banerjee had pursued vote bank politics and gave OBC certificates to a number of castes, and the beneficiaries included Muslims, Bangladeshis and Rohingyas. "The Calcutta High Court's decision in the matter that came on Wednesday was a tight slap on Ms. Banerjee's vote bank politics," he said.

The court had, on Wednesday, struck down as illegal the OBC status of several communities in West Bengal granted since 2010. It said the inclusion of 77 classes of Muslims in the list was to "treat them as vote bank". "What does Mamata Banerjee think of herself? Is she above the Constitution? This is the height of arrogance and anarchy," he said. The BJP leader said that Ms. Banerjee had no right to continue to hold the post of Chief Minister, who provided reservation on the basis of religion in violation of the Constitution.

Flags Rahul's remarks

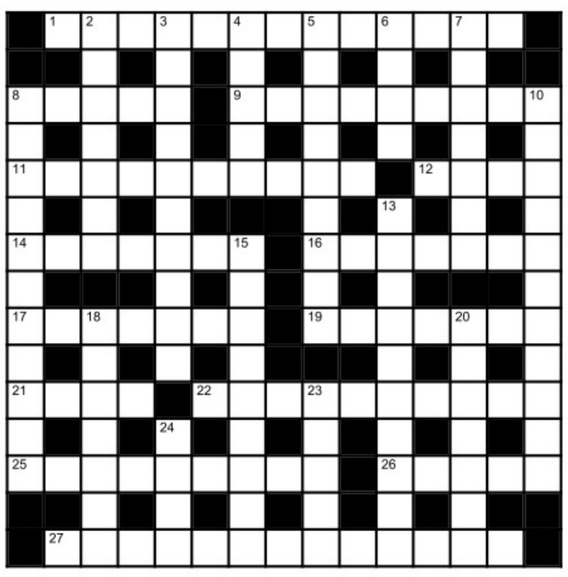
Mr. Chouhan also targeted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over the statements he made in Panchkula on Wednesday. Mr. Gandhi had said that he was aware that the system was heavily aligned against marginalised castes and that his party would work to ensure the participation of these communities in public life and resources.

TH CROSSWORD + 14183

(set by Dr. X)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Naughty sailor had a pic arousing sexual desire (13)
8 Model poses for assignments (5)
9 Get tar that is primarily carcinogenic compound in this? (9)
11 Excellence of flatfish with a nice salad (10)
12 Worry after husband gets fever (4)
14 Grand diner across river is better (7)
16 Thief at centre cut cop, injured the back of the head (7)
17 Son enters shed after working, turns and falls asleep (4,3)
19 Uneasiness resulting from small ulcer developing over right side of lip (7)
21 Lecturer crushed by wife going astray, becoming lethargic (4)
22 Caution one getting joint and cocaine in show (10)
25 Criticising overacting without hesitation (9)
26 Spot senorita in trendy clothes (5)
27 Reveal what to do to prevent pot boiling over (4,3,3,3)

Down

2 Team is buckling under pressure in game (7)
3 Analysis of urine and stool provides answer (10)
4 Orders tart on reflection after drinking a little tea (5)
5 Smart blue gown at inauguration for lady (9)
6 Exposes in topless nightclubs around island (4)
7 A silly person touring north European city (7)
8 Bow tie night planned initially (2,5,4)
10 Right habitat to conserve national bird (11)
13 Recognised deceit, card's fake (10)
15 Renovate finally after uncontrolled bushfire (9)
18 Revolutionary cover girl's predicament (7)
20 High priest is quiet about dispute (7)
23 Most despicable, stealing soldier's watch (5)
24 Charge to catch first show of traditional gala (4)

SUDOKU

		5						7
4			5		9			
	2				3		5	
2			1	8				
1	7						9	2
				2	4			3
	9		3				2	
			7		1			5
5						9		

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

S	E	T	A	S	I	D	E	■
P	■	R	■	O	■	E	■	C
O	P	E	N	A	I	R	■	A
I	■	A	■	P	■	M	■	R
L	O	T	T	O	■	A	R	B
S	■	Y	■	P	■	T	■	O
■	■	■	R	E	C	O	G	N
C	■	M	■	R	■	L	■	M
O	N	O	M	A	T	O	P	O
L	■	O	■	■	■	G	■	N
I	N	C	O	G	N	I	T	O
S	■	H	■	R	■	S	■	X
E	L	E	G	A	N	T	■	I
U	■	R	■	P	■	S	■	D
M	U	S	K	E	T	■	G	E

D	J	U	S	T	■	A	D	E
■	E	■	P	■	U	■	C	■
A	I	R	■	A	I	L	E	R
■	F	■	I	■	G	■	R	■
U	T	U	S	E	S	A	R	B
■	O	■	■	I	■	T	■	T
N	I	S	A	N	C	E	■	■
T	■	G	■	N	■	R	■	M
■	I	A	■	■	■	O	■	T
C	■	D	■	A	■	■	■	■
K	N	E	A	D	■	■	■	■
Y	■	N	■	H	■	■	■	■
I	T	E	M	I	S	E	■	■
D	■	N	■	E	■	R	■	■
G	E	N	D	A	R	M	E	■

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	4	6	1	9	8	5	2	7
5	7	8	3	6	2	4	9	1
2	1	9	5	4	7	3	8	6
7	9	1	6	3	5	2	4	8
6	8	3	4	2	1	9	7	5
4	2	5	7	8	9	6	1	3
8	6	2	9	7	3	1	5	4
1	3	7	2	5	4	8	6	9
9	5	4	8	1	6	7	3	2

FAITH

Azhwars praise the Lord

While writing a novel or literature, an author may inadvertently omit to include specific ideas or information he initially thought of. Sri Gomadam bhattar Swamigal said in a discourse that Vedas are not written by anyone and contain all valuable guidelines for our life.

Dharmasastra, itihasas and Puranas supplement the Vedic injunctions. Lord Krishna says in Sri Bhagavad Gita, "*Tasmat sastram pramanam te*" (Chapter XVI, sloka 24). Sastras are the authority. They tell those acts that will please God, distinguish between righteous and unrighteous, truthful and untruthful, and give guidance as charters (*Sasanath sastram*).

There are 108 divya kshetras. Except for Sri Vaikunta, the remaining 107 are denoted by the Vedas as "*Satham Dhamani Sapthacha*." Some temples are brought into existence by humans, some by rishis, some by celestials, and some by God Himself, called Swayam Vyaktha Kshetras. There are eight such kshetras. The most important are Srirangam and Tirupathi, which 17 Puranas and 10 Azhwars praise. With God's benign blessings and melting devotion, Azhwars composed wonderful hymns that glorified the deities of divyakshethras. They are called *Azhwar Mangalasasanam* (benedictory poems by Azhwars). Lord Narayana resides happily in all these kshetras.

INBRIEF

'NHAI's assets monetisation can fetch up to ₹60,000 cr.'

Rating agency ICRA on Thursday said state-owned NHAI's targeted monetisation of road assets could fetch the government up to ₹60,000 crore in the current fiscal year. In April 2024, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had released an indicative list of 33 road assets it plans to monetise in FY25, through a mix of toll-operate-transfer (TOT) and sale to the NHAI's Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT). These assets are spread across 12 States. PTI

Rating support if RBI payout used to cut fiscal deficit: S&P

India can get 'rating support' over time if it utilises the highest-ever dividend of over ₹2 lakh crore received from the Reserve Bank to reduce fiscal deficit, said an S&P Global Rating analyst on Thursday. "The additional dividends are about 0.35% of GDP. Whether it would support the narrowing of the fiscal deficit in fiscal 2024-25 would really depend on the final budget that would be passed after the election results," said S&P Global Ratings Analyst YeeFarn Phua. PTI

Japan's Exedy Corp to invest in EV firm Omega Seiki

Japan's Exedy Corporation has announced its decision to invest in Omega Seiki Pvt. Ltd., an electric mobility solutions company based in India. The company has not announced the quantum of investment. "Moving forward, we will collaborate on the development of electric vehicles equipped with our proprietary high-efficiency electric drive units, which consist of motors and continuously variable transmissions," the company said on its website.

Sensex, Nifty hit all-time high on RBI's bonanza to Centre

Key indices surged 1.6% to closing and intraday highs after buying momentum in auto, banking stocks on Thursday, following the RBI's ₹2.11 lakh crore dividend payout to Govt. on Wednesday

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Key benchmark stock indices on Thursday surged 1.6% to all-time closing highs, and intraday highs, after a buying momentum in auto and banking stocks owing to the RBI's decision on Wednesday to transfer ₹2.11 lakh crore as surplus to the Centre.

The S&P BSE Sensex gained 1,196.98 points, or 1.61%, to 75,418.04, its all-time closing high. During intraday, the Sensex had scaled to an all-time high mark of 75,499.91. Top gainers in Sensex included L&T (3.64%), M&M (3.55%), Axis Bank (3.30%), Maruti (2.82%), UltraTech Cement (2.74%) and IndusInd Bank (2.29%). The NSE Nifty-50 index, too, surged 369.85 points, or 1.64%, to 22,967.65, its all-time closing high. During intraday the Nifty-50 index touched an all-time high of 22,993.60.

"There was enthusiasm in the equity market after the RBI approved a ₹2.11 lakh crore dividend to the government," said Neeraj Chadawar, Head - Fundamental and Quantitative Research at Axis Securities. "This indicates a better fiscal position and softer bond yields going forward," he said. "As a result of this positive move, we are seeing some short covering in the market," Mr. Chadawar added.

Surplus surprise
Banking regulator's surplus transfer move cheers equity markets

- S&P BSE Sensex gains 1,196.98 points to 75,418.04, and 75,499.91 intraday
- Top gainers in Sensex include L&T (3.64%), M&M (3.55%), Maruti (2.82%)
- NSE Nifty-50 surges 369.85 points to 22,967.65, and 22,993.60 intraday

May business growth robust led by services and exports: flash PMI data

Reuters
BENGALURU

Business activity in India expanded robustly in May, helped by the dominant services industry, according to a survey that also showed exports rising at a record pace and the sharpest job addition rate in almost 18 years.

HSBC's flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (flash PMI), compiled by S&P Global, rose slightly to 61.7 this month from April's final reading of 61.5, marking 34 months above the 50-level separating growth from contraction.

"The composite PMI ticked up further in May, recording the third strongest reading in close to 14 years, supported by a sharp acceleration in the service sector," noted Pranjul Bhandari, chief India economist at HSBC.

The flash services PMI index rose to a four-month high of 61.4 this month from 60.8 in April and a preliminary manufacturing PMI showed strong growth, albeit slightly weaker than last month. It dipped to 58.4 from 58.8.

Robust demand was supported by new business in the services industry, which grew at the fastest pace since January, as well as rising manufacturing output and new orders.

Strong international demand meant overall exports expanded at the fastest rate since the start of series in September 2014.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	THURSDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	75,418	1.61
Gold	73,550	-1.43
Brent oil	81.72	-0.51

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	3387.30	246.35
Adani Ports	1443.35	65.15
Apollo Hosp	5970.05	101.90
Asian Paints	2903.75	18.00
Axis Bank	1165.25	39.25
Bajaj Auto	8963.45	157.90
Bajaj Finserv	1608.45	24.50
Bajaj Finance	6826.65	82.10
Bharti Airtel	1374.05	26.15
BPCL	647.45	6.95
Britannia Ind	5281.15	13.75
Cipla	1489.15	6.85
Coal India	497.30	-4.40
Divis Lab	4113.00	54.45
Dr Reddys Lab	5897.70	24.95
Eicher Motors	4852.85	157.40
Grasim Ind	2453.80	17.15
HCL Tech	1353.55	10.50
HDFC Bank	1492.60	33.40
HDFC Life	565.65	5.25
Hero MotoCorp	5145.20	149.25
Hindalco	676.80	-7.75
Hind Unilever	2382.50	15.60
ICICI Bank	1134.50	23.40
IndusInd Bank	1440.85	35.90
Infosys	1472.40	17.60
ITC	441.35	1.45
JSW Steel	917.00	1.20
Kotak Bank	1709.05	9.50
L&T	3585.40	124.55
LTIMindtree Ltd.	4831.30	55.55
M&M	2609.20	88.15
Maruti Suzuki	12934.90	403.55
NestleIndia	2474.15	5.00
NTPC	372.30	-1.55
ONGC	283.45	5.45
PowerGrid Corp	319.90	-5.85
Reliance Ind	2972.10	50.80
SBI Life	1446.80	19.40
State Bank	832.10	13.35
Shriram Finance Ltd.	2400.45	63.70
Sun Pharma	1495.10	-44.20
TataConsumerProduct	1117.95	-2.40
Tata Motors	962.35	14.85
Tata Steel	175.50	2.20
TCS	3893.45	61.45
Tech Mahindra	1337.50	7.10
Titan	3452.05	68.20
UltraTech Cement	10170.55	275.70
Wipro	465.80	4.50

'BSE calls off merger with NSE arm at IFSC'

Ashley Coutinho
Avinash Nair
MUMBAI/AHMEDABAD

A BSE spokesperson said despite long discussions the bourse decided to call off the merger

The merger between India INX and NSE IX, the two stock exchange arms of BSE and the National Stock Exchange operating at the International Financial Services Centre, has been called off, more than a year after talks began.

A BSE spokesperson said the discussions had gone on for a while but the bourse has decided to call off the merger. An email to NSE did not get a response.

K. Rajaraman, Chairman, International Financial Services Centres Authority said: "The BSE board has not agreed to the merger. The board went through the proposal in great detail and communicated that they see more value in investing in the exchange and growing products. As long as they are ready to invest, we are also fine with the decision."

(The writers are with The Hindu businessline)

IndiGo's Q4 net profit doubles to ₹1894 cr.

The Hindu bureau
NEW DELHI

No-frills airline IndiGo announced a foray into business travel with an upcoming 'tailor-made' product for the busiest routes on a day it announced a 'record' profit of ₹8,172 crore for the financial year 2024.

It clocked a loss of ₹305 crore in the previous fiscal.

IndiGo also reported a doubling of net profit to ₹1,894 crore for the fourth quarter of last fiscal from ₹919 crore in the year-earlier period. This is the sixth straight profitable quarter for IndiGo since COVID-19 and the first year where all four quarters have been profitable.

Speaking during the post-results analysts' call, CEO Pieter Elbers said the business product was aimed at addressing the "ever-growing need for premium travel".

RCap moves NCLT on plan

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Reliance Capital adminstator has moved NCLT for a 90-day extension of deadline to implement Hinduja Group's resolution plan.

Azad bags DRDO lab deal for turbo engine

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Rakesh Chopdar

Azad Engineering has bagged DRDO laboratory Gas Turbine Research Establishment's (GTRE) contract for end-to-end manufacturing, assembly and integration of fully-assembled advanced turbo gas generator engines.

Deliveries of the first batch of the integrated turbo engines will begin early 2026, the precision engineering and manufacturing company said.

Defence applications
The engine is designed with a single-spool turbojet set-up, incorporating components such as a 4-stage axial flow compressor, an annular combustor, a single-stage axial flow uncooled turbine and a fixed-exit area nozzle. This sophisticated propulsion system is suitable for various defence applications.

"We have now expanded our manufacturing capabilities to provide end-to-end production for a fully assembled advanced turbo engine," Azad Engineering CEO Rakesh Chopdar said.

Engineering exports fell in April on metal exports' slide

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A sharp drop in exports of metals like iron and steel due to tepid global demand, and more competitive pricing from Chinese steel producers, dragged India's engineering exports down 3.2% in April to break a four-month growth streak. However, exporters are hopeful of an uptick in the coming months.

Excluding iron and steel, whose exports slid 36.4%, engineering exports recorded 2.6% growth last month, the Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) said on Thursday.

ITC Q4 net slips 1.3%, to pay ₹7.50 dividend

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

ITC Ltd. reported fourth-quarter standalone net profit slid 1.3% from the year-earlier period to ₹5,020.20 crore.

Revenue from operations in FY24 Q4 grew marginally to ₹17,752.87 crore from ₹17,506.08 crore. For FY24, net profit grew 8.9% to ₹20,422 crore.

FY24 revenue dips
Revenue from operations dipped to ₹70,105.29 crore from ₹70,251.28 crore in the previous year.

The Board has recommended a final dividend of ₹7.50 per share.

Including interim dividend of ₹6.25 per share paid on February 27, the total dividend for the financial year ended March 31 amounted to ₹13.75 per share of ₹1 each.

"The company delivered a resilient performance during the year amid a challenging macroeconomic and operating environment on a high base (FY23 Gross Revenue and EBITDA grew 17.6% and 26.5% respectively)," ITC said in a filing.

'Unsold homes in Delhi-NCR halved'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The unsold housing stock in Delhi-NCR has declined 57% in the last six years to 86,420 units at the end of March quarter this year, according to Anarock.

Realty consultant Anarock said NCR's unsold stock slid from 2,00,476 units at end March 2018 quarter to 86,420 units as of March 31.

In the same period, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai saw unsold stock decline from 1.96 lakh units in Q1 2018 to over 1.76 lakh units in Q1 2024.

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KACHCHI MOODOOR
ARCHAKAS WELFARE TRUST
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Kottur Gardens, Chennai - 600 085, India
Ph: +91-44-24471936 E-mail: kmawt1@gmail.com
Website: www.kmawt.org

SREE MAHALAKSHMYAI NAMAHA
SREE CHANDRASEKARA GURUBHYO NAMAHA

APPEAL

The MAHASWAMI OF KANCHI ordained this Public Charitable Trust in 1986 for providing financial aid to Archakas who live in poor conditions, upholding our religious and cultural heritage in ancient temples in rural areas. Many of them do not have any means of sustenance and we should deem it our duty to provide them with minimal financial aid to ensure that they continue to perform their important role in the rural communities.

MAHA PERIYAVA had instructed that the Trust should seek donations primarily from individual devotees; and provide financial assistance to these Archakas from the income derived from investing the donations. He had further desired that those with gross income of over Rs. 4,000/- per month could contribute their one month's gross income.

The Trust currently provides a monthly honorarium to 464 poor Archakas, (165 Poojaries, 135 Bhattacharyas and 164 Sivacharyas) spread over rural Tamil Nadu. The Trust also has a Group Life Insurance Policy for the benefit of eligible Archakas.

We earnestly request all the devotees to donate liberally for this noble cause, keeping in mind **MAHA PERIYAVA's** desire. By His Grace and the generous contribution from his devotees, it has been possible to enhance the monthly honorarium progressively to **Rs. 2,600/- (Rupees Two Thousand Six Hundred only) per month.** However, with the increasing number of beneficiaries and reduction in the interest rates, it is necessary to enhance the Corpus fund significantly to maintain the current level of financial aid to the poor Archakas.

Online Donations to Corpus Fund can be made through our website: www.kmawt.org.

Also, Crossed Cheque or Demand Draft payable at Chennai drawn in favour of **'KACHCHI MOODOOR ARCHAKAS WELFARE TRUST'** can be sent to the Trust office. Please do mention that the donation is towards **CORPUS FUND** in the covering letter, and do include Donor's Name, PAN number, Address, Cell/Phone Number, and Email-Id (if available).

Please note that Income Tax Section 80G Benefit is available to the Donors.

24.05.2024

S. RAGHUNATHAN
Advocate, Chennai
Chairman

TRUSTEES

1. Sri R. Subramanian, Chennai
2. Sri M.D. Gopal, Dubai
3. Sri S. Chandrasekar, Chennai
4. Sri Prakash R. Bhat, Hony. Secretary & Treasurer

Cement firms transitioning to electric trucks: CMA leaders

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

India's cement industry has begun transition away from internal combustion engines with the induction of 150 electric trucks to its diesel-dominated, heavy-duty fleet to get insights into the way forward as it looks to cut down on carbon footprint, according to Cement Manufacturers Association (CMA) leaders.

The piloting of the 150 electric trucks is expected to help understand challenges better, especially the evolving charging infrastructure, reduced payload on account of the battery weight to viability as well, they said on the sidelines of CII Green Cementech 2024 conference here.

"The transition to e-trucks is a critical step in our journey towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving broader goals of energy efficiency and sustainability," CMA President and Shree Cement MD Neeraj Akhoury said, adding the challenges included availability of trained drivers.

The higher cost of ownership, longer payback periods and limited charging infrastructure notwithstanding, the industry has displayed leadership by deploying EVs for material handling and dispatch operations even on lead distance routes exceeding 100 kms, Conference Chairman and JK Cement DMD and CEO Madhavkrishna Singhania said.

Deploying e-trucks is expected to cut logistic costs by 25-40%. However, profitability could be achieved only if the vehicles are operated for more than 8,000 km per month.

Policy support sought by the industry to accelerate the adoption of e-trucks include government subsidies for e-trucks and incentives for retrofitting ICE trucks.

Textile sector needs cheaper inputs: CITI

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

The Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) has urged the government to ensure availability of cotton and man-made fibre (MMF) at internationally-competitive prices to propel the Indian textile industry towards the target of $350 billion by 2030.

The government should remove import duty from all varieties of cotton, including cotton waste and raise cotton productivity with a focus on specialised seed varieties. On the MMF front, it should exempt all fibres and yarns that are not available domestically from the scope of Quality Control Orders (QCOs).

It should also exempt inputs imported by Advance Authorisation holders, EoU and SEZ units from the mandatory QCOs issued by the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals on the lines of exemption provided for QCOs by the Textiles Ministry.

"Raw material availability at internationally-competing prices can address stagnation in the industry," said Rakesh Mehra, Chairman CITI.

GENEVA

UN investigators probing mass displacement in Myanmar

AP

UN war crimes investigators said on Thursday they were tracking the escalating fighting in conflict-torn Myanmar's Rakhine State, and were probing reports that thousands from a persecuted minority had been displaced. Clashes have rocked Rakhine since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked junta forces in November. AFP

KYIV

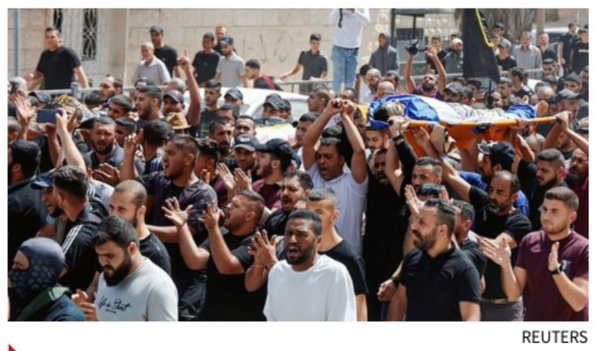
At least five killed, nine injured in Russian strikes on Kharkiv

AFP

Russian strikes on the eastern Ukraine city of Kharkiv killed at least five people and injured nine, regional authorities said on Thursday. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the attacks as "brutal" and said Russia was "taking advantage" of Ukraine's lack of air defence systems to launch fatal attacks on towns and cities. AFP

JENIN

Two-day Israeli raid on West Bank city leaves 12 Palestinians dead



REUTERS

A two-day Israeli raid on the occupied West Bank city of Jenin killed at least 12 Palestinians, health authorities said on Thursday. Israel's Army said on Wednesday troops had "exchanged fire with armed men and killed a number of terrorists, including two terrorists who threw explosives at the forces". AFP

OSLO

Norway to close border to Russian tourists from May 29 onwards

AP

Norway said on Thursday that it will close its border to Russian tourists, shutting their last direct access to Europe's border-free Schengen area, as Moscow vowed to respond to the "discriminatory" measure. As of May 29, most Russian tourists will not be able to enter Norway, the government said. AFP

China holds drills around Taiwan, vows 'punishment for separatists'

Taiwan independence forces will be left with their 'heads broken and blood flowing' after colliding against the trend of China achieving complete unification, says Foreign Ministry; Chinese naval vessels and military aircraft encircle the island

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

China on Thursday encircled Taiwan with naval vessels and military aircraft in war games, as it vowed the blood of "independence forces" on the self-ruled island would flow.

The two days of drills are part of an escalating campaign of intimidation by China that has seen it carry out a series of large-scale military exercises around Taiwan in recent years. The drills come after Lai Ching-te was sworn in as Taiwan's new President this week and made an inauguration speech that China denounced as a "confession of independence".

A Chinese military ship, right, sailing near the Pengjia Island, off the Taiwan coast, as the latter's forces patrol the sea. AFP

As the drills got under way, China's military said they would serve as "strong punishment for the separatist acts of 'Taiwan independence' forces". Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin then delivered a warning that included language more commonly used by China's propaganda outlets.

"Taiwan independence forces will be left with their heads broken and blood flowing after colliding against the great... trend of China achieving complete unification," Mr. Wang told presspersons. China – governed by the Communist Party since 1949 – claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to bring the democratic island under its rule, by force if necessary.

Thursday and Friday's drills – codenamed "Joint Sword-2024A" – involve aircraft and ships surrounding the island to test their combat capabilities, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) said.

Taiwan's response

Taiwan responded by deploying air, ground and sea forces, with the island's Defence Ministry vowing to "defend freedom". President Lai said he would "stand on the frontline" to defend Taiwan in a speech on Thursday afternoon, without directly referring to the ongoing drills.

"Faced with external challenges and threats, we will continue to defend the values of freedom and democracy, and safeguard peace and stability in the region," he said. China has repeatedly branded Mr. Lai a "dangerous separatist" who would bring "war and decline" to the island. Beijing was further incensed with his inauguration speech in which he hailed a "glorious" era for Taiwan's democracy.

The drills, which began on Thursday morning, are taking place in the Taiwan Strait and to the north, south and east of the island, as well as areas around the Taipei-administered islands of Kinmen, Matsu, Wuqiu and Dongyin.

Russian military's deputy chief of staff jailed for graft

Associated Press
MOSCOW

A deputy chief of the Russian military general staff has been arrested on charges of large-scale bribery, Russian news reports said on Thursday, the latest in a series of bribery arrests of high-ranking military officials.

Lt. Gen. Vadim Shamarin

The arrest of Lt. Gen. Vadim Shamarin followed the arrest this week of Major General Ivan Popov, a former top commander in Russia's offensive in Ukraine, also on bribery charges.

In April, Deputy Defence Minister Timur Ivanov was arrested for bribery. Mr. Ivanov was a close associate of Sergei Shoigu, whom President Vladimir Putin dismissed as Defence Minister soon after Mr. Putin's inauguration to a new term in May.

Lt. Gen. Yury Kuznetsov, head of the Defence Ministry's personnel directorate, was arrested on bribery charges two days after Mr. Shoigu was replaced.

'No campaign'

Mr. Shamarin is also the head of the Defence Ministry's main communications directorate. He is being held in custody for two months, Russian news agencies cited a military garrison court as saying, but other details of the case were not reported.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the wave of arrests of defence officials did not indicate a campaign against the military.

"The fight against corruption is consistent work. This is not a campaign, it is constantly ongoing work. This is an integral part of the activities of our law enforcement agencies," he said on Thursday.

The deputy head of the federal prison service for the Moscow region, Vladimir Telayev, also was arrested Thursday on charges of large-scale bribery, Russian reports said.

Mr. Shoigu had been widely blamed for Russia's failure to capture Kyiv early in the Ukraine fighting and was accused of incompetence and corruption by mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, who launched a mutiny in June 2023 to demand the dismissal of Mr. Shoigu and military chief of staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov.

At least nine dead as stage collapses at Mexico election rally

Agence France-Presse
MEXICO CITY

An election rally in northern Mexico descended into tragedy after a gust of wind sent the stage careening into the crowd on Wednesday night, killing at least nine people, including a child, authorities said.

At least 50 other people were injured in the accident, some seriously, according to Nuevo Leon Governor Samuel Garcia.

Footage of the incident showed a chaotic scramble as people screamed and tried to leap away from the collapsing structure while the lights and a giant screen toppled onto the area where presidential candidate Jorge Alvarez Maynez and members of his Citizens' Movement party were standing.

Security forces cordon off the accident site in Mexico. AP

Mexico's meteorological service had warned of heavy rain, wind gusts of up to 70 km per hour and possible tornadoes in Nuevo Leon and other northern states on Wednesday night.

The event was the closing campaign rally for Citizens' Movement candidate for mayor of San Pedro Garza Garcia, Lorenia Canavati.

U.K. political parties hit campaign trail as election battle starts

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

U.K. political leaders kicked off six weeks of campaigning on Thursday, firing the first angry shots in their electoral battle before the country votes for a new government on July 4.

Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak ended prolonged speculation about the general election in a rain-soaked speech on Wednesday outside Downing Street, which some took as an omen for his Conservatives' chances at the ballot box.

The Conservatives have been in power since 2010, first with David Cameron as Prime Minister, then Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, and increasingly beset by scandal and ideological infighting with hardliners. The right-wingers' tumultuous time in power has been dominated by Brexit and its chaotic aftermath, as well as COVID and a cost-of-living crisis, all of which has eaten into public support.

Anti-immigration fringe party Reform UK is snapping on the heels of the Tories, polling at 11% with the potential to split the right-wing vote.

The vote – the first to be held in July since 1945, when Labour under Clement Attlee defeated Winston Churchill's Conservatives – is Mr. Sunak's first national electoral test.

Labour is also promising economic stability, saying the Tories' reputation for sound stewardship of the nation's finances had been stained by Ms. Truss's short-lived tenure.

Russia passes decree to allow seizure of U.S. assets in nation in a tit-for-tat move

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

Many Western companies have left Russia since it launched its offensive on Ukraine

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday signed a decree allowing the confiscation of assets inside Russia belonging to the United States, its citizens and companies, to compensate those hit by Western sanctions against Moscow.

The West froze around $300 billion of Russian financial assets, mostly its central bank reserves, after Moscow ordered troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

And the U.S. Congress last month passed a Bill that would allow President Joe Biden to use frozen Russian assets in the United States for a special fund to support Ukraine.

The Russian decree will give Russian companies, organisations and individuals that have been hit by sanctions the right to apply for compensation from the Russian government.

The compensation would come in the form of U.S.-owned assets – such as real estate, companies, bank accounts or shares – based in Russia.

Many Western companies have left Russia since it launched its offensive on Ukraine.

Those that remain – or have yet to finalise sales of their Russian businesses – could now be at risk of having their assets seized.

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Heads of Iran-allied militant groups meet in Tehran; discuss Gaza 'political situation'

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Leaders of the Iran-led, so-called "axis of resistance", including Hamas's Ismail Haniyeh, discussed the war in Gaza during a meeting in Tehran on the sidelines of President Ebrahim Raisi's funeral, state media reported on Thursday.

The "axis of resistance" brings together Iran's regional allies in the fight against Israel, including the Palestinian movement Hamas, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis and Iraqi Shia armed groups.

The leaders of these movements met on Wednesday after attending ceremonies organised in Tehran to pay tribute to Raisi, who died on Sunday in a helicopter crash in northwest Iran.

The meeting was attended by Haniyeh, the head of Hamas's Qatar-based political bureau, as well as Hezbollah deputy Naim Qassem and Houthi spokesperson Mohammed Abdulsalam.

The 'axis of resistance' brings together Iran's regional allies in the fight against Israel

Resistance front

They discussed "the latest political, social and military situation in Gaza and the Al-Aqsa Flood operation and the role of the resistance front," state broadcaster *IRIB* reported.

The meeting reportedly stressed "the continuation of jihad and struggle until the complete victory of the Palestinian resistance in Gaza with the participation of all resistance groups and fronts in the region", *IRIB* said. Iran's *Fars* news agency said representatives of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Iraqi groups were also present at the meeting.

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निविदा संशोधन सूचना संख्या-2
निविदा 27/2023-24

1. इस कार्यालय के पत्र क्रमांक 9145-55 दिनांक 12.03.2024 द्वारा प्रकाशित निविदा सूचना संख्या-27/2023-24 की निविदा तिथियों में निम्नानुसार संशोधन किया जाता है:-

विवरण	पूर्व में प्रकाशित तिथियां	संशोधित तिथियां
निविदा फार्म डाउनलोड करने की तारीख	15.03.2024 सायं 09.30 बजे से 21.05.2024 को सायं 6.00 बजे तक	15.03.2024 सायं 09.30 बजे से 07.06.2024 को सायं 6.00 बजे तक
निविदा फार्म अपलोड करने की अंतिम दिनांक	15.03.2024 सायं 09.30 बजे से 21.05.2024 को सायं 6.00 बजे तक	15.03.2024 सायं 09.30 बजे से 07.06.2024 को सायं 6.00 बजे तक
निविदा खोलने की दिनांक	23.05.2024 अपरान्ह 03.00 बजे	10.06.2024 अपरान्ह 03.00 बजे

UBN No.
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PWD2324WS0B22136 PWD2324WS0B22187 PWD2324WS0B22189 PWD2324WS0B22192
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PWD2324WS0B22201 PWD2324WS0B22165 PWD2324WS0B22166 PWD2324WS0B22167
PWD2324WS0B22170 PWD2324WS0B22171 PWD2324WS0B22173 PWD2324WS0B22175
PWD2324WS0B22182

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550 Scrapped Vehicles of BMTC will be sold through KPPP e-auction. As per the Government order, bidders with RVSF (Reigistered Vehicle Scrapping Facility) are eligible to participate in the tender.The last date for submission of prequalificaion/Technical offer **is 05/06/2024 @ 17.00 hrs.** The date of Auction will be intimated to prequalified bidders through e-mail. The interested Bidders may log onto **https://www.kppp.gov.in** for further details and registration. **Office Address:** The Controller of Stores and Purchases, BMTC Central Office, 5th Floor, Shanthi Nagar, Bangalore- 560 052. Contact phone Nos: 91 7760991159/ 7760991157 / 7760991988, 080-22952009.

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STELLAR CAMPAIGN

When chips were down, we started to play for self-respect: RCB's Kohli

EMMANUAL YOGINI

RCB's Virat Kohli talked about his side's remarkable comeback in IPL 2024. "We started expressing ourselves, started to play for self-respect and then the confidence came back. The way we turned things around and qualified was truly special, something that I will always, always cherish and remember," Kohli said.

CLIMBING UP

Ashwin overtakes Narine, becomes fifth-highest wicket-taker in IPL

EMMANUAL YOGINI

Rajasthan Royals spinner R. Ashwin (180 wickets from 211 games) overtook Kolkata Knight Riders's Sunil Narine (179 wickets from 176 matches) to become the fifth-highest wicket-taker in the history of the IPL. Ashwin accomplished this movement up with his spell of two for 19 in the Eliminator against Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

DUBIOUS DISTINCTION

Royal Challengers have the most number of defeats in playoffs

EMMANUAL YOGINI

Royal Challengers Bengaluru, after going down to Rajasthan Royals in the Eliminator on Wednesday, has suffered the most defeats in the IPL playoffs. In 16 playoff games, the Bengaluru team has lost on 10 occasions. Chennai Super Kings, with nine losses in 26 playoff matches, had held the dubious record.

DEFINITELY NOT?

Hopefully Dhoni will be available for CSK next year, says CEO

K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

CSK CEO K.S. Viswanathan said he is very, very hopeful of M.S. Dhoni participating in IPL 2025 as a player. "It is a question which only M.S. can answer. The question for us, we have always respected the decisions taken by him. We have left it to him. But we are very hopeful that he will be available for CSK the next year."

Will Royals rule the roost or Sunrisers shimmer?

Samson will be buoyant after ending a five-game winless run while Cummins will hope to put behind the performance in Qualifier 1; the winner will face Shreyas' Knight Riders on Sunday

QUALIFIER 2

N. Sudarshan
CHENNAI

The wheel of fortune spins quite fast in the Indian Premier League. Sunrisers Hyderabad and Rajasthan Royals, who meet in Qualifier 2 at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium here, will attest to this.

SRH went into Tuesday's Qualifier 1 on the back of authoritative victories over Lucknow Super Giants and Punjab Kings, only for table-topper Kolkata Knight Riders to reduce it to rubble.

RR went into Wednesday's Eliminator following a five-game winless run that included four defeats, but managed to edge out the high-flying Royal Challengers Bengaluru by four wickets

Shifts in momentum

Friday's clash will thus pit two sides that have seen shifts in momentum, and each side will be hoping that *Lady Fortuna* sheds her capricious whims and smiles only in its direction.

SRH leader Pat Cummins explained his team's effort against KKR as "bit off the pace" and seemed glad that it had not come in a must-win game. After all, one of the perks of finishing in the top-two is that you get two bites at the cherry.

Swing in fortunes: Jaiswal will be confident after his 30-ball 45 in the Eliminator while Head will be desperate to come good after two consecutive ducks. EMMANUAL YOGINI & B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

SRH will hope that the second bite too doesn't taste as bitter. For that, the top-order – led by the marauder-in-chief Travis Head and little tornado Abhishek Sharma that has helped amass 100-plus PowerPlay runs twice – has to recover after being stung by Mitchell Starc.

It now has the arduous task of countering another left-arm quick in Kiwi Trent Boult, whose swing and guile pegged RCB back in the PowerPlay. The world-class duo of R. Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal – an asset SRH doesn't possess – will present a spin challenge like no other and there is also the death-overs craftiness of Avesh Khan to deal with.

Ashwin, in fact, turned in a Player-of-the-Match performance against RCB (4-0-19-2) and Chepauk is his home turf, the spin-friendly conditions of which he knows like the back of his hand.

RR will also take heart from Shimron Hetmyer's return and his crucial role – alongside compatriot Rovman Powell – in handling a nervous chase versus RCB.

Tom Kohler-Cadmore, who has replaced fellow Englishman Jos Buttler in the XI, provided a glimpse of his bonafide T20 credentials in the last match. If he comes good on the grandest of stages, RR will be extremely pleased.

With the conditions set to be hot and humid, and dew expected to arrive during the second innings, teams would ideally prefer chasing. But five of SRH's eight wins have come batting first. It floundered in its last attempt to set a target. Will it back its strength or go with accepted wisdom?

Today's match
QUALIFIER 2
SUNRISERS vs. RAJASTHAN ROYALS
Chennai, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
PLAYED: 19
SRH 10 | RR 9
PREVIOUS MEETING
SRH won by one run, 2024
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA

From red to white, Ashwin masters the balancing act in royal fashion

S. Dipak Ragav
AHMEDABAD

R. Ashwin couldn't have asked for a better build-up to this year's IPL. Before the T20 extravaganza, the off-spinner had a memorable Test series against England at home. He reached significant milestones, becoming the second Indian bowler to take more than 500 Test wickets and also playing his 100th Test.

Barren stretch

However, as he swapped the red cherry for the white kookaburra ball, the wily spinner had a tough beginning to the 17th edition of the IPL. He went wicketless for six consecutive games and had only two scalps after nine outings.

However, in the last four matches, the 37-year-old has managed to turn things around, bagging seven wickets and being economical (ER: 6.81).

Ashwin saved his best for the big occasion on Wednesday, producing a match-winning performance in the Eliminator against Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

His spell (4-0-19-2) during the middle phase of the contest proved decisive as Rajasthan Royals tightened the screws on the Bengaluru side. That Ashwin did not concede a single boundary reflected his accuracy and control. Along the way, he dispelled the myth that an off-spinner bowling to a right-hander was not an effective option.

Against RCB's right-hand heavy batting lineup, Ashwin stuck to a predominantly over-the-wicket line to tie down Cameron Green and Rajat Patidar – one of the better players of spin – by bowling into their pads and cramping them for width.

Opening up

After his Player-of-the-Match show, Ashwin opened up about his difficult start to IPL 2024.

"Truth be told, my body wasn't moving at all in the first half of the season. I felt like I wasn't able to complete my action many times. I had a little bit of an abdomen injury as well. So I couldn't get through it a lot," said Ashwin.

"For me, it was more about the rhythm and hitting the right lengths. You come from Test-match mode and your body needs to get into it. I am ageing, so it's not that easy anymore.

"The amount of repetitions I need for a T20 game is a lot. I actually bowl a lot off game time as well. I needed that amount of bowling time to get into rhythm," added Ashwin.

Flag-bearer

At a time when off-spinners are becoming scarce in white-ball cricket, Ashwin is flying the flag for his craft.

Having rediscovered his mojo, the Tamil Nadu off-spinner will hope to continue his form in the home stretch of the competition which will be played in his backyard over the next three days, starting with Friday's Qualifier 2 clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Turning it around: After a tough start to the IPL season, Ashwin has clicked into gear. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

RCB needs to maximise home advantage: Flower

S. Dipak Ragav
AHMEDABAD

Despite crashing out of the tournament following a four-wicket loss to Rajasthan Royals in the Eliminator here on Wednesday, Royal Challengers Bengaluru coach Andy Flower praised skipper Faf du Plessis and star player Virat Kohli for the side's remarkable comeback from the brink of elimination to even reach the Playoffs.

Fighting back

RCB, which had just one win from the first eight outings, turned things around by winning its last six league matches to qualify for the last-four stage.

"I think our guys have fought brilliantly over the last 10 weeks to come back from our first half of the tournament," said Flower.

"I certainly would pay tribute to Faf du Plessis for his captaincy and Faf and Virat (Kohli) for how they have led from the front as role models and professional sports people. They have been great role models for everyone else, and the rest of the boys fought hard to get us back into the tournament."

Role models: du Plessis and Kohli led by example during RCB's remarkable run. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Looking to the future, Flower said that the team must bolster its squad with players with specific skill sets, especially to master its home conditions.

"I do think the Chinnaswamy (Stadium) has some particular qualities that we need to be able to exploit. You certainly need highly skilful bowlers at Chinnaswamy.

"Simply put, pace is not going to be the answer there. You need skilful, intelligent bowlers and people that can bowl to really specific plans at Chinnaswamy," the 56-year-old explained.

"And we have all seen how the power game has affected T20 cricket recently. So on the batting front, you certainly need to recruit batsmen with that sort of power to keep up that tempo," added the former Zimbabwe skipper.

INBRIEF

World No. 5 Pegula pulls out of Roland-Garros

World No. 5 Jessica Pegula announced her withdrawal from the Roland-Garros on Thursday, saying she had not yet sufficiently recovered from an injury. "Unfortunately pulling out of @rolandgarros this year," the American posted on Instagram. "I'm just about back to practicing normal (haven't had any issues for weeks) but played it super safe with recovery & return to play. If I had another 5-7 days, I would have been there 100%."

ICC launches anthem ahead of the men's T20 World Cup

The International Cricket Council has launched an all new anthem and music piece, composed by Grammy-award winning composer Lorne Balfe, to be played across ICC world events. The anthem, encapsulating the dynamic spirit of the sport across its different formats, will debut in the opening match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup between USA and Canada in Dallas, Texas, on June 1. Balfe is known for composing for projects such as *Mission: Impossible-Dead Reckoning* Part 1, *Life on Our Planet,* and *Top Gun: Maverick*.

England-Pakistan first T20I abandoned

England's first T20I against Pakistan was abandoned without a ball being bowled on Wednesday because of rain at Headingley. The teams are using the four-match series as a warm-up for the T20 World Cup taking place next month in the West Indies and USA. England is the defending champion. The series continues at Edgbaston on Saturday before games next week in Cardiff and the Oval in London.

Velavan and Abhay progress in QSF 3 squash tournament

Velavan Senthilkumar and Abhay Singh made winning starts to their respective campaigns at the $53,500 QSF 3 squash tournament in Doha, which is a PSA World Tour Bronze event. Velavan defeated local challenger Yousef Essam Farag 11-7, 11-4, 11-4 in 32 minutes in the first round, while Abhay beat Pakistan's Muhammad Asim Khan 11-2, 11-9, 15-13 on Wednesday.

Indian junior men's, women's hockey teams suffer losses

The Indian men's and women's junior hockey teams suffered losses in their respective matches against Belgium here in the ongoing tour of Europe. Both the teams lost 2-3. While Binima Dhan (49th and 58th minutes) scored a brace for the women, captain Rohit (44th and 57th) got two goals for the men's team.

Schumacher's family wins compensation for AI 'interview'

Michael Schumacher's family has secured a €200,000 compensation from the publishers of the German magazine *Die Aktuelle* that printed an AI-generated 'interview' with the seven-time Formula One world champion. The magazine's editor was sacked last year, with the Funke media group apologising to Schumacher's family. *Die Aktuelle* ran a front cover in April 2023 with a picture of a smiling Schumacher and the headline promising 'Michael Schumacher, the first interview'. The strapline added: "it sounded deceptively real" but inside the 'quotes' were revealed to have been generated by artificial intelligence.

LIVE TELECAST

T20I tri-series: Netherlands vs Ireland, FanCode, 2.30 p.m.
IPL: Qualifier 2: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.
LaLiga: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)

Unseeded Nadal to face Zverev in opening round

Wawrinka drawn against fellow three-time Grand Slam winner Murray; defending champion Djokovic plays Herbert and Swiatek takes on a qualifier in their opening round matches

ROLAND-GARROS

Reuters
PARIS

Big challenge: It could be a tough ask for the unseeded Nadal when he takes on Zverev. FILE PHOTO

Rafael Nadal was handed a tough start to what is expected to be his farewell to the French Open at Roland-Garros as the record 14-time champion was drawn against fourth seed Alexander Zverev in the first round.

Novak Djokovic will begin his quest for a 25th Grand Slam crown against local hope Pierre-Hugues Herbert, while top-ranked Iga Swiatek kicks off her French Open title defence against a qualifier, after the draw on Thursday.

Unseeded Nadal, who missed his favourite Grand Slam tournament due to injury last year, has plummeted down the rankings during an extended spell on the sidelines and has said he expects to retire after this season.

The pairing drew an audible gasp in the room and the two will meet for the first time since their 2022 semifinal clash at Roland-Garros which Nadal won after Zverev suffered an injury and retired.

Should Nadal win the match, he could face 2021 U.S. Open winner Daniil Medvedev in quarterfinals.

There were cheers from the audience when Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka was drawn against fellow three-time Grand Slam winner, Briton Andy Murray.

Djokovic has struggled in the first half of 2024 and is yet to win a title this year. The Serbian was knocked out of the Italian Open in the third round this month after suffering a freak head injury.

The World No.1 will be looking to put that disappointment behind him and get his season back on track in Paris, where he could meet Casper Ruud in the quarterfinals in a rematch of last year's final.

Two-times Grand Slam champion and last year's losing semifinalist Carlos Alcaraz begins against a qualifier, while newly-crowned Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner faces American Christopher Eubanks.

Hot streak

In the women's draw, Swiatek is in a hot streak of form after winning both the Madrid Open and Italian Open, and is favourite to claim her fourth title at Roland Garros.

However, the Pole could face a number of tough opponents in her quarterfinal, including the four-times Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka, Miami Open winner Danielle Collins and Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova.

World No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka meets Erika Andreeva and U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff, who reached the final here in 2022, plays a qualifier in the first round.

Costantini ready to revive old ties

TABLE TENNIS

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Costantini.
FILE PHOTO: S. SIVA SARAVANAN

Massimo Costantini's return for a third stint as the India head coach augurs well for the national table tennis teams, which did not have a permanent head coach for five years, for its maiden stint in team events at the Olympic Games.

The veteran Italian, though, is setting his plans in place not just for Paris, but also to ensure India joins the three big Asian superpowers in the world of table tennis.

"My goal is to make India next to China, Japan, Korea. My model is to learn from their system to manage the team in a very, very successful way," Costantini told *The Hindu* from New Delhi on Thursday. "I will discuss my ideas and plans internally with the TTFI and with the players."

New scenario

Over the last few years, players' personal coaches have had a bigger say in planning their itineraries. Costantini agreed that it will be a new scenario for him to strike the balance.

"Some of the players have personal coaches, this is a new concept in the panorama. So, it will be different from the previous stints," Costantini said.

"It's too early to say something and we have the Olympic Games around the corner where India will compete in team events for the very first time. It's a huge achievement. So, let's see."

The Olympic squad selection has stirred up a controversy with G. Sathiyan and Ayhika Mukherjee's omission from the squad leading to discontent. Costantini, however, is confident that the duo will be rigorously involved in the lead-up to Paris being reserve players.

"We will have a training camp at the beginning of June. So, being alternate players, they are with us. I have to prepare them like I prepare the other players because, until the day of the start of the event, anything can happen."

"I will prepare all the players in the same way. We would consider Sathiyan and Ayhika as a part of the team and I hope they will contribute actively. Because they also know that it doesn't end with the Olympics. We will have many opportunities after that. I am already thinking about 2028."

Preetismita wins World youth 40kg title with world record

WEIGHTLIFTING

Sports Bureau

Power-packed show: Preetismita claimed three golds for her snatch, clean and jerk and total performances. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Fifteen-year-old Preetismita Bhoi became the first weightlifter from the country to win a title with a clean and jerk World record and led an unprecedented Indian 1-2 finish in the women's 40kg in the World youth championships in Lima (Peru).

Preetismita, hailing from the high performance sub-centre in Dhenkanal (Odisha), lifted 57kg in snatch and 76kg in clean and jerk, which was 1kg better than the previous world record of 75kg set five years ago, to win the women's 40kg crown with a total of 133kg. She claimed three golds for her snatch, clean and jerk and total performances.

"I am honoured and thrilled to have set a new world record. This is a dream come true and I couldn't have done it without the support of my coaches, family, and Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLF). I hope this inspires others to pursue their dreams with determination and hard work," said Preetismita.

"Preetismita is a true role model for aspiring weightlifters," said IWLF president Sahdev Yadav.

Another Odisha girl Jyoshna Sabar claimed silver with an aggregate of 125kg (56kg, 69kg).

Payal (women's 45kg) and Babulal Hembrom (men's 49kg) also ensured podium finishes. Payal got a silver with an aggregate of 147kg, while Hembrom claimed bronze with 193kg. A. Maharajan (men's 55kg) narrowly missed a podium finish by 1kg (215kg) as he finished fourth.

Indian lifters collected three gold, three silver and five bronze medals, including their performances in snatch and clean and jerk.

A chance for Indians to win many quota places

BOXING

Sports Bureau

A rejigged 10-member Indian side will try to win as many quota places as possible in the second World Olympic qualifying event starting in Bangkok on Friday.

For India, which is yet to claim a single quota place in the men's section, the return of former World championships silver medallist Amit Panghal (51kg) will be a big boost. The diminutive southpaw will be keen to book a ticket to second successive Olympics.

Former World youth champion Sachin Siwach (57kg) and Worlds bronze medallist Nishant Dev (71kg), who narrowly missed out on a quota in the previous qualifier, will be among the seven male boxers who hold promise.

As India lost one of its four women's quotas following Parveen Hooda's ineligibility due to her whereabouts failure, Jaismine Lamboria has been sent to reclaim the 57kg slot. She may find it tough to shed three extra kilos and perform at her best.

Ankushita Boro (60kg) and Arundhati (66kg) are strong fighters and can achieve their target.

A preparatory camp, involving boxers from 13 countries including USA, Britain and Ireland, at the same venue provided the Indians sparring sessions.

The squad: Men: Amit Panghal (51kg), Sachin Siwach (57kg), Abhinash Jamwal (63.5kg), Nishant Dev (71kg), Abhimanyu Loura (80kg), Sanjeet (92kg) and Narender Berwal (+92kg). **Women**: Jasmine Lamboria (57kg), Ankushita Boro (60kg) and Arundhati Choudhary (66kg). **Quota places available (only weights relevant to India): Men:** 51kg: Four, 57kg: Three, 63.5kg: Five, 71kg: Five, 80kg: Three, 92kg: Four, +92kg: Four. **Women:** 57kg: Four, 60kg: Three, 66kg: Four.

Ashmita stuns Beiwen; Sindhu makes quarterfinals

Press Trust of India
KUALA LUMPUR

Ashmita Chaliha scored a stunning win over third seed Beiwen Zhang of USA in the second round and P.V. Sindhu survived a scare before beating Korea's Sim Yu Jin in Malaysia Masters on Thursday.

The results (second round): Women: Ashmita Chaliha bt Beiwen Zhang (USA) 21-19, 16-21, 21-12; P.V. Sindhu bt Sim Yu Jin (Kor) 21-13, 12-21, 21-14. **Doubles:** Sung Shuo Yun & Yu Chien Hui (Kor) bt Treesa Jolly & Gayatri Gopichand 21-18, 22-20, 21-14; Pearly Tan & Thinaah Muralitharan (Mas) bt Simran Singhi & Ritika Thaker 21-17, 21-11. **Men:** Lee Zii Jia (Mas) bt Kiran George 21-13, 21-18. **Doubles:** Ji Ting He & Xiang Yu Ren (Chn) bt Krishna Prasad Garaga & K. Sai Pratheek 21-11, 21-9. **Mixed doubles:** Chen Tang Jie & Toh Ee Wei (Mas) bt B. Sumeeth Reddy & N. Sikki Reddy 21-9, 21-15.

Blasters appoint Stahre as new head coach

Sports Bureau

Kerala Blasters announced the appointment of Mikael Stahre as the new head coach. The 48-year-old joins on a two-year contract that will keep him at the helm until 2026.

Stahre has managed over 400 matches with prominent teams such as AIK (Swe), Panionios (Gre), IFK Göteborg (Swe), Dalian Yifang (Chn), BK Häcken (Swe), San Jose Earthquakes (USA), Sarpsborg 08 (Nor), and Uthai Thani (Thai). Stahre said: "I'm delighted to be joining Kerala Blasters - a fantastic privilege!"

Leverkusen not 'Neverlusen' anymore as Atalanta wins title

FOOTBALL

Reuters
DUBLIN

Stunning: Lookman's hat-trick put an end to Leverkusen's 51-game unbeaten streak. AFP

Ademola Lookman scored a stunning hat-trick as Atalanta beat Bayer Leverkusen 3-0 in the Europa League final on Wednesday to win just the second major trophy in its 117-year history and end the German champions' remarkable unbeaten streak.

Lookman, who struggled to establish himself in the EPL, struck twice inside the first 26 minutes before sealing the win 15 minutes from full-time.

The victory ended Gasperini's own two-decade long pursuit of major silverware as his side totally outplayed Xabi Alonso's formidable Leverkusen side – or 'Neverlusen' as it had been dubbed after going an incredible 51 games unbeaten.

But just as it did against Premier League heavyweight Liverpool and Olympique de Marseille in the previous two rounds, Atalanta didn't give its opponent a sniff to mark its first European final with a famous victory.

The result: Atalanta 3 (Lookman 12, 26, 75) bt Bayer Leverkusen 0.

Fuge, the lone bright spot for India

ARCHERY WORLD CUP

Sports Bureau

Prathamesh Fuge's entry into the semifinals was the lone bright spot for India on a disappointing day at the Archery World Cup Stage-2 at Yecheon (South Korea) on Thursday.

In the compound men's individual event, Fuge defeated Poland's Przemyslaw Konecki 148-144, Mexico's Sebastian Garcia 147-144, Turkey's Emircan Haney 147-146 and Austria's Nico Wiener 146-145 to set up a last-four clash with American James Lutz.

Priyansh exited in the third round, while Abhishek Verma and Rajat Chauhan fell in the second.

World champion Aditi Swami was shown the door by American Alexis Ruiz 145-142 and Avneet Kaur was beaten by Korean Oh Yoohyun 145-143 in second round.

V. Jyothi Surekha lost to Sara Lopez 145-142, while Parneet Kaur came up short against top-seeded Korean Han Seungyeon 145-138 in the quarterfinals.

In recurve, the second-seeded men's team of Tarundeep Rai, B. Dhiraj and Mrinal Chauhan, which received a bye, was beaten 5-3 by Canada.

The women's team of Deepika Kumari, Bhajan Kaur and Ankita Bhakat, after getting a bye, lost to Vietnam 5-4 (27-25).

Is this the year Leclerc gets to end his Monaco 'jinx'?

The twisting, metal-fenced streets have certainly not been kind to the kid who grew up watching the red Ferraris and travelling the track by bus on his way to school, dreaming of one day racing there

FORMULA ONE

Reuters
MONACO

Since the start of the championship in 1950, Formula One has not had a home winner of its showcase Monaco Grand Prix and Charles Leclerc has enjoyed little luck in the principality since he joined Ferrari in 2019.

The 'will it be this year' question, not asked in 2020 when there was no race due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has grown more persistent. The 26-year-old has yet to stand on his home podium in five attempts, four with Ferrari, but he can end that jinx on Sunday.

Bring cheer to the locals: Leclerc will strive to upstage runaway leader Verstappen and Norris this weekend at home. GETTY IMAGES

Special

"Monaco is very special for me. True that it hasn't been the most successful race for me until now," said Leclerc after finishing third in last weekend's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola.

"However, the pace was always there and that gives me the confidence that it will be the case this year too. However, Monaco is so specific that we need to start a little bit from a blank page.

"Free practice is super, super important to build the pace little by little. But I'm confident we'll be strong."

The twisting, metal-fenced streets have certainly not been kind to the kid who grew up watching the red Ferraris and travelling the track by bus on his way to school, dreaming of one day racing there. In 2021, he secured pole but could not start due to a driveshaft failure.

In 2022 he was fastest again in qualifying but finished only fourth. He also crashed a 1974 ex-Niki Lauda Ferrari when he drove it for a demonstration run at that year's Historic Monaco Grand Prix.

Last year Leclerc ended up sixth. In 2019 he failed to score. This time he arrives with four podiums from seven races and second in the standings dominated as ever by Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

Red Bull's triple World champion won last year and his increasingly absorbing battle with McLaren's Lando Norris is the talk of the sport.

Norris beat the Red Bull in Miami for his first F1 win and finished second in the races either side of that in China and Imola.

Verstappen has meanwhile won five out of seven and started all on pole position, a run of eight in a row including last season, equalling two Formula One records in the process. No driver has ever taken nine successive poles.

Taiwan beats India in the quarterfinals

JR. DAVIS CUP

Sports Bureau

Taiwan beat India 2-0 in the quarterfinals of the Asia-Oceania Junior Davis Cup under-16 tennis tournament in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on Thursday.

In the positional matches for 5-8, India will play China on Friday.

The results (quarterfinals): **Taiwan bt India 2-0** (Wang Yen Chun bt Samarth Sahita 7-5, 5-7, 6-0; Kuan Shou Chen bt Aradhya Kshitij 6-4, 6-1).

Ramkumar exits in the quarterfinals

TENNIS

Sports Bureau

Top seed Philip Sekulic of Australia beat Ramkumar Ramanathan 7-6(6), 4-6, 7-6(0) in the quarterfinals of the $41,000 Challenger tennis tournament in Kachreti, Georgia.

Other results:
$25,000 ITF men, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Singles (pre-quarterfinals): Benjamin Lock (Zim) bt Chirag Duhan 6-2, 6-7(5), 6-4; Siddharth Vishwakarma bt Raghav Jaisinghani 6-1, 7-5; Kabir Hans bt Karan Singh 6-2, 6-4; Adil Kalyanpur bt S.D. Prajwal Dev 7-6(5), 0-6, 6-4; Ishaque Eqbal bt Courtney Lock (Zim) 6-3, 6-3.
$15,000 ITF men, Bol, Croatia: Singles (pre-quarterfinals): Jasza Szajrych (Pol) bt Yuvan Nandal 7-6(4), 6-2.
$15,000 ITF men, Kingston, Jamaica: Singles (first round): Aryan Shah bt John Chin (Jam) 5-7, 6-2, 6-3.
Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Adhithya Ganesan (USA) & Aryan Shah bt Jody Maginley (Ant) & Josshua Ssheehy (USA) 6-3, 3-6, [10-6].
$40,000 ITF women, Goyang, Korea: Singles (pre-quarterfinals): Aoi Ito (Jpn) bt Vaidehi Chaudhari 6-1, 2-6, 6-1.
Doubles (quarterfinals): Lizette Cabrera & Gabriella Fick (Aus) bt Vaidehi Chaudhari & Yukina Saigo (Jpn) 6-4, 6-2.

BENGALURU ROUND-UP

Vultures CC posts win

Vultures CC beat Century Cricketers by four wickets in the KSCA under-16 inter-club tournament here.

The scores: Century Cricketers 119/9 in 29 overs (Harshil Jain 28) lost to Vultures Cricket Club 123/6 in 19.3 overs (Vedaraj Yadav 51, Vishwa Venkatadri 3/14).
Karnataka Youth Cricket Association 111 in 30.1 overs (N.P. Sahas 34, Aalapkrishna Manikandan 35, M.D. Dharsh 3/22, A. Rishik 5/19) lost to The Bangalore Cricketers 113/1 in 12.4 overs (S. Shivaprasad 56, Abhinav Kulkarni 31).
Visweswarapuram Cricket Club (2) 110 in 34.4 overs (Vikram 36, Saksham Agrawal 5/25) lost to Coles Cricket Club 114/2 in 18 overs (Rathin Sanjay 41).
Vijaya Cricket Club 125/6 in 20 overs (James Sullad 62, Nitish Arya 4/17) lost to Rajajinagar Cricketers 126/6 in 18.3 overs (Niranjan Ashok 38, Manish Patil 3/22).
Jolly Cricketers 170 in 42.2 overs (D. Bhargav 86, Shamanth 29, Dheeraj Kumar Yadav 3/22) lost to Bangalore Star Cricket Association 174/6 in 33.1 overs (Tharun Mahesh 71, N. Prajwal 43).

St. Joseph's BHS gets the better of Nice Academy

St. Joseph's BHS defeated Nice Academy in the 7th Save Water Cup, organised by Gopalan Sports Cricket Academy, here.

The scores:
Under-14: Nice Academy 110/6 in 20 overs (Shailesh 26) lost to SJBHS 111/2 in 14.2 overs (Prabhav Pyadh 65, Laksh 3/13).
MPCA 131/7 in 20 overs (Sree Naren 29) lost to DPS North 132/1 in 17.1 overs (Hruthik Kumar 59, Tanush Mishra 49).
DPS East 150/4 in 20 overs (Aditya Kumar 44, Hritvik Mishra 37, Ramnath Nayak 31) bt High Camp 93/7 in 20 overs (B. Thomas 30).
Under-12: Nice Academy 119/6 in 20 overs (Rishon Jonathan 38) lost to RXCA 120/3 in 13.4 overs (Saarang 50, Dwit 29).
GSCA 153/3 in 20 overs (Nihal 59, Aadil 51) bt TSF 55 in 18.3 overs.
Red Toss 96/8 in 20 overs (Karthik 4/12) lost to MPCA Lions 97/1 in 7.2 overs (Rishab 39).

Devarsh stars in TSCA (Hubli)'s victory

Devarsh scored a half century as TSCA (Hubli) defeated RCA (Mysore) by 118 runs in a Tiger Cup under-14 match on Thursday.

The scores: TSCA (Hubli) 171 in 24.3 overs (Devarsh 97, T.P. Hari Krishna 3/21, S. Sachin Raj 3/35) bt RCA (Mysore) 53 in 17 overs.
KCC Gurukul 180/8 in 30 overs (Vineet Patil 67, Ninad 34, Sachith Shetty 3/14, Tejas Bhat 3/24) lost to Play Smart 181/3 in 25.5 overs (R. Pavandeep 95, P. Lithik Reddy 37).
Kapil CC 149 in 24.5 overs lost to Young Lions 151/4 in 23.5 overs (G. Tarun 52, Adithya Layam 26).

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to bring to the NOTICE of General Public, that my clients **1. SRI.G.TEJARAM,** S/o, Sri.Gisharam, Aged about 50 years, PAN NO.ABSPT3124F and AADHAR NO.4221 2849 4107 and **2. SMT.THOLA DEVI,** W/o Sri.Tejaram.G, Aged about 45 years, PAN NO.ABZPT8844P and AADHAR NO.3811 4634 3803, Both are Residing at No.46, Choyal Nivas, 6th Main, 7th Cross, Shakambari Nagar, Bangalore – 560 078, intends to purchase the schedule property from **SRI.SANTHOJI MAHADEVA BHASKAR RAO alias SRI.SONTHOJI MAHADEVA BHASKAR RAO alias SRI.BHASKAR RAO.S.M,** S/o Late Mahadeva Rao and Late Chandra Bai, PAN NO.ALGPB3240C and AADHAR NO.2894 4017 9438.

This notice is hereby given for the information of General public that, any persons/Banks/Financial institutes having any right, title, share, claim or interest against/in the schedule property may contact me with their documentary/legitimate proof in support of their claim within **10 (Ten) days** from the date of this notice. If no claim is so lodged with me within **10 (Ten) days** from the date of publication, after which my clients shall proceed with the Absolute Sale Deed on the basis that there are no claims whatsoever, as if the same is free from all kinds of claims/encumbrances and no claim shall be entertained later.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the Property bearing Old No.10, carved out of Sy.No.58/3A, Situated at **Sarakki Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bangalore,** presently within the limits of Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, New Municipal No.43, (Old No.10), assigned New Municipal No.10/43, Situated at **6th Main Road, Shakambari Nagar, Bangalore**, having PID No.57-273-043, Measuring : East to West : On the Northern side 65 feet, On the Southern side 93 feet and North to South : On the Eastern side 40 feet, On the Western side 50 feet, in all measuring 3555 Square feet.

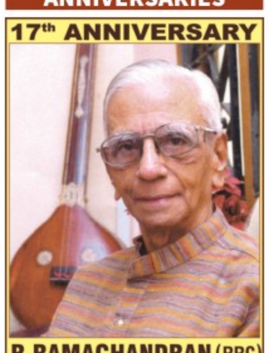
AND BOUNDED ON THE :
East by : Road, West by : Site No.21, North by : Site No.9, South by : Site No.11 and Site No.20.

Mrs.M.Manjula, Advocate
No.C-1, 1st Floor, Maruthi Pearl Plaza, D.V.G.Road, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru-560004. Mob : 9945027091.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

17th ANNIVERSARY



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FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY

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19.3.1942 - 24.5.2023
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Founder, Anti-Corruption Movement.
"sharp in tongue and moustache, never corrupted, fidelitous to Lord Muruga, now forever at his feet"
Meena Arasu, and your loving family

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Phone: 080-23460460 (5 Lines)
E-mail: keauthority-ka@nic.in Website: http://kea.kar.nic.in

No: ED/KEA/ADMN/CR- 05/2024 **Date: 22-05-2024**

PGCET-2024 - Admission to 1st Year / 1st Semester MBA / MCA / M.E. / M. Tech. / M. Arch Courses

1) Applications are invited from the eligible interested Karnataka and non-Karnataka candidates for admission to 1st year / 1st semester full time / part time MBA / MCA / M.E. / M. Tech. / M. Arch courses in the institutions affiliated Universities which will be notified by the Government of Karnataka for the year 2024-25. Candidates have to appear for the Post Graduate Common Entrance Test-2024 conducted by Karnataka Examinations Authority to become eligible for admission as per 2005 and 2011 PGCET rules and its amendments.
2) **GATE qualified candidates in Engineering and Technology discipline are only eligible to take admission to Various M.Tech Programmes under VTU, Belgaum.** The candidates with valid GATE score should compulsorily enter application online to become eligible for admission to M.E. / M. Tech / M. Arch courses, **but they need not appear for PGCET-2024.**
3) For admission to MBA / MCA courses, non-Karnataka candidates are eligible to select ONLY the seats surrendered by the management, if any.
4) Please note that SC / ST / OBC eligibility criteria are applicable to Karnataka SC / ST / OBC candidates only.
5) **Post Graduate Common Entrance Test-2024 - Time Table and Examination Scheme.**

Date	Timings	Admission to 1st Year / 1st Semester	Number of Questions	Total Marks
13-07-2024 SATURDAY	2.30 PM to 4.30 PM	M.E. / M. Tech / M. Arch.	100	100
14-07-2024 SUNDAY	10.30 AM to 12.30 PM	MCA	100	100
	2.30 PM to 4.30 PM	MBA	100	100

(Non-programmable calculators are allowed for M.E./M.Tech/M.Arch examination only)

6) SYLLABUS: PGCET-2024 new syllabus is hosted on the KEA Website for the information of the candidates. URL: **https://cetonline.karnataka.gov.in/kea/pgcet24**
7) Interested and eligible candidates can register and apply online for **PGCET-2024 from 11.00 AM onwards on 27-05-2024 upto 11.59 PM on 17-06-2024.** Fee has to be paid by the registered and applied candidate **on or before 18-06-2024 6.00 PM.** Only after confirmation of receipt of payment of fees, candidates will be permitted to download the Admission Tickets for PGCET-2024 exam.
8) Before registering through online for admission to PG courses, applicants have to compulsorily read Information Bulletin, detailed notification and understand the eligibility conditions, educational qualification, classification of seats and eligibility to claim such seats hosted on the KEA Website.
9) All the admissions and undergraduate Degrees to claim eligibility for admission to any of the PG courses are subject to approval of the Government / VTU / other respective University.
10) Candidates are advised to visit KEA Website: **https://kea.kar.nic.in** for more details notification regarding admission rules, eligibility clauses and various schedules.

Sd/-
(H. Prasanna, IAS)
Executive Director

DIPR/CP/103/2024-25

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PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT HAVERI

This office letter No.033/PB/Tnd/2023-24/5054/501/ Dated: 23-05-2024

E-Tender Notification

On 23-05-2024 through Karnataka Public Procurement Portaltender notification has been issued for the following Work Indent No. 7228-3rd call Last date for submission of tender receipt is assigned on Dated: 05-06-2024 (upto 4:00 PM). For further additional information, any changes & queries visit **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Shi/- (Mahabalesappa.K)
Executive Engineer,
PWD Division, Haveri

DIPR/Haveri/05/2024-25/
DeshpandePublicity

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
ZILLA PANCHAYATH, BELLARY
Office of the Executive Engineer, P.R.E. Division, Bellary,
No. EE/PRED/BLY/AE-1/KKRDB/TDR/2024-25/ 120
Dt. 23-05-2024.

Short Term Tender Notification (Through KPPP Portal only)

On behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Karnataka tenders are invited from the eligible contractors who have enrolled in Panchayath Raj Engineering Department for 24 work comprising of approved building and Road works under KKRDB 2023-24, through KPPP portal. Contractors are required to submit the tender before 31-05-2024 at 4.30 PM by uploading the relevant documents through KPPP portal website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** by downloading the formats for submission of tenders from 23-05-2024 to 31-05-2024 at 4.30 PM. Tenders will be opened through KPPP portal on 01-06-2024 at 5.30 PM. Any changes in the notification will be published KPPP website only. Accepting/rejection of tenders without assigning reason is reserved. Any details can be obtained in person at the office or through telephone No. 08392-266173.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
Panchayath Raj Engineering Division Ballari
DIPR/Ballari/11/KSMCA/2024-25

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, Phulwarisharif, PATNA - 801507

Advertisement Number : DE-MISC/14/2023-AIIMS, Patna Date : 24.05.2024

ADMISSION NOTICE
(Post-Doctoral Fellowship Course -2024)

AIIMS Patna invites applications for appearing in the entrance examination to be held for the selection of candidates for admission to the newly started Post-Doctoral Fellowship (PDF) Course in the following disciplines.

S.No.	Name of PDF Course	Duration	Seats
1	Critical Care Medicine	2 years	02
2	Neuro-anaesthesiology	2 years	02
3	Paediatric Anaesthesia	2 years	02
4	Paediatric Critical Care	2 years	01
5	Neuro and Vascular Interventional Radiology	2 years	02
6	Neurotology and skull base Surgery	2 years	01
7	Lower Limb arthroplasty	2 years	01
8	Neonatal Surgery	2 years	01

The detailed advertisement and online application forms are available on our website: **https://www.aiimspatna.edu.in** under the "Opportunities" section. All applicants are required to visit the institute website regularly as all subsequent corrigendum /addendum/updates will only be uploaded on the website.

Last date of application submission	10.06.2024 at 05:00 P.M.
Date of Online Examination	30.06.2024 (Sunday)

Sd/-
Dean (Examination)

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Gundai Venkat Kaushik S/O, Gundai Rathnamaiah R/o #38, 1st Main, 3rd Cross, Gundappa Reddy Layout, Hebbala, Bangalore 560032 have changed my name to Kaushik Naidu Gundai for all purposes.

I, KANEEZ Fatima, W/o Shahjahan, R/a #9/2, 3rd Floor, 2nd Main, Matadahalli, Bengaluru-560032 have changed my name to Kaneez Fathima vide affidavit dt: 23.05.2024 sworn before Notary Meer Hassan, B'lore

I, PRASHANTH Belur Gururaja Rao, R/a #57, Sri Anugraha, 5th Main Road, BSK II Stage, Padmanabhanagar, Bengaluru-560070 have changed my minor son's name from Aditya Prashanth to Adithya Prashanth vide affidavit dt: 22.05.2024 sworn before Notary S.I.Balaguru, B'lore

I, ANUSHA, D/o Girish Gudur, R/a House No 58-95/1, C.B.Road, Near C.B.Coman, Charabasaveshwara Nagar, Shahpur City, Shahpur, Yadgir, Karnataka-585223, camping at Bengaluru, have changed my name to Anusha Gudur vide affidavit dt:22.05.2024 sworn before Notary S.I.Balaguru, B'lore

I, MAHESH Son of Siddayya R/A, No.2-98, Near Old masjid, Kalagi,Taluka Kalagi , Dist Kalaburagi, Karnataka, Pincode-585312 have changed my name from Mahesh to Mahesh Guttedar vide affidavit dated 22-05-2024 before Notary A.M Rajasekar, Bengaluru-560087

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HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
ENGINEERING WING

Office of the Chief Engineer, Arogya Soudha, 3rd floor, Leprosy Hospital Premises, 1st Cross, Magadi Road, Bengaluru-560 023 Telephone No.: 080-29557023
E-mail:**cekhsdrp@gmail.com & cekhsdrp-hfws@karnataka.gov.in**

No: HFWD/EW/CE/TA-1/TND/2024-25/223 Date:23.05.2024

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Chief Engineer, H&FWD, Engineering Wing, Bengaluru invites tender from eligible contractors registered in KPWD/ eligible Company Registration certificate Registered under Companies Act in two cover tender document system in KPPP Portal.

(Rs. In Lakh)

Sl. No.	Description of works	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money Deposit	Stipulated period for Completion (including monsoon)
1	Upgradation of Primary Health Centre to Community Health Centre at Siddaramana-hundi at Mysuru Taluk, Mysuru.	1300.00	15.00	11 Months
2	Construction of Radiology Block in the premises of District Hospital Chikkaballapura	820.00	12.30	11 Months
3	Providing Installing and Commissioning of Firefighting system to Indiragandhi Institute of Child Health Hospital Bengaluru.	406.00	6.09	6 Months
4	Construction of 4th & 5th Floor Over Existing C& D Hostel Block in the premises of HIMS at Hassan, Hassan District.	840.00	12.60	11 Months
5	Construction of B.Sc Nursing Hostel for Girls in the premises of RIMS Raichur, Raichur District.	450.00	6.75	11 Months
6	Construction of District Integrated Public Health Laboratory in the premises of GIMS Gadag, Gadag District. (Call-2)	111.00	2.00	6 Months
7	Construction of District Integrated Public Health Laboratory on existing Trauma care Centre at Second floor in the premises of Wenlock in Dakshina Kannada District.(Call-2)	111.00	2.00	6 Months

Calendar of Events: Sl.No.1 to 5: (1) Last date for receipt of tenders: **25.06.2024 upto 16.00 hrs. (2)** Date of Opening of Tenders (Technical Bids): **26.06.2024 at 16.00 hrs.**
Calendar of Events: Sl.No. 6 to 7: (1) Last date for receipt of tenders:**11.06.2024 upto 16.00 hrs. (2)** Date of Opening of Tenders (Technical Bids): **12.06.2024 at 16.00 hrs.** The tender details can be downloaded from the KPPP portal platform. Tenders shall be submitted electronically at **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** and tender processing fee shall also be paid electronically. Interested eligible contractors shall register on the e-procurement platform to participate in this tender.

NOTE: 1. All the rights are reserved by the under signed for postponement or cancellation of entire tender process, rejection of bids / individual bid etc., without assigning any reason.
2. Henceforth, any changes in the schedule / contents will not be published through news papers and further changes will be updated only on KPPP Portal.

Sd/- Chief Engineer, H&FWD, Engineering Wing, Bengaluru.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform that my client is the absolute owner in possession and enjoyment of the **property No. 27** which is more fully described in the schedule hereunder having acquired the same through a **registered WILL dated 11-05-2015** registered as **document No. NGB-3-00161-2018-19** stored in **CD No.NGBD348** in the office of the **Sub-Registrar, Nagarabhavi on 10-1-2019 executed by Late Venkataramanappa who died on 03-12-2015** and also through a **registered release deed by Mr. G.V.Manjunatha dated 24-06-2021** registered in **Book-1,** as **Document No. BTM-1-00798-2021-22** stored in **CD No. BTMD734** in the office of the Sub-Registrar, BTM Layout, Bangalore.

My client intends to make improvements in the schedule property by constructing a building over the same. Therefore, any person who have any claim over the schedule property shall lodge such claim in writing with supporting documents with the undersigned **within seven days** from the date of publication of this notice. If no such claim or objection is received, my client will start the intended process. Time barred claim if any will not be binding on my client.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of the vacant site property bearing **No.27, Corporation PID No. 65-45-27 situated at BTM 1st stage, 1st Phase, BTM Layout, Bangalore** measuring East to West : 21.03 Meters, North to South : 25.45 Meters **totally measuring 535.21 Meters** and bounded on : East by : Property bearing No. 26, West by : Road, North by : Road, South by : Property bearing No. 10.

P.Mahalinga Bhat and Srividya P.M,
Advocates,
Office Address: No.2386,T F-2, 3rd Floor, Keerthi Kuteeram Apartment, Pipeline Road, K.S. Layout, Bangalore – 78
Mobile - +91 9341215791
Bangalore/Dated : 24-05-2024.

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Infantry Road | Yeshwanthpur | Davanagare | Hassan | RR Nagar | Women & Child, Infantry Road | Yelahanka

BANGALORE URBAN ZILLA PANCHAYATH

Office of the Executive Engineer, Rural Drinking Water & Sanitation Division, First Floor, Zilla Panchayat Building, S. Kariyappa Road, Banashankari, Bengaluru - 560070.

No: EE/RDW&SD/BNG(U)/TND/01/2024-25
Dated: 22-05-2024

KPPP SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE

Tenders are invited through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal for the works approved Under Various Head of Grants for the year 2023-24. The Tender Documents can be obtained and Submitted **on or before 01-06-2024 upto 4.00 PM.** For further details contact the above address during office hours or visit Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Rural Drinking Water & Sanitation Division
Bangalore Urban Dist, Bengaluru.

DIPR/CP/107/
Adverto/2024-25

BENGALURU SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED

Office of the Deputy General Manager-2, BSWML, 1st Floor, UNI Building, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru – 560 052

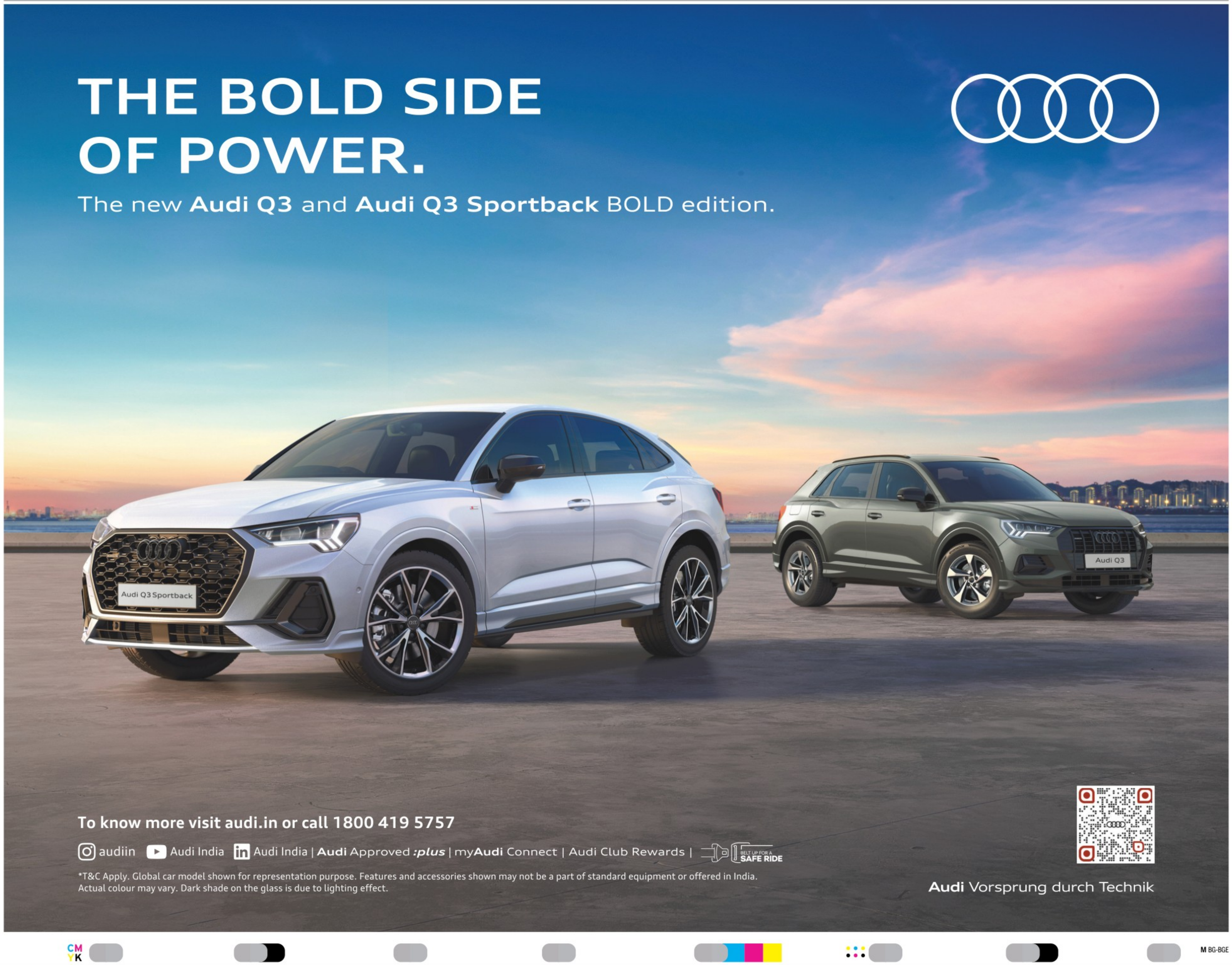
No. DGM-2/(BSWML)/Corr-2/24-25 **Date:23.05.2024**

Corrigendum-2

Sub: Reg. Cancellation of Tender Notification for the work of Establishment of Pre-Fabricated shed for plastic waste management centre at selected location including electrical, water and other services.

Ref: **This office Tender Notification No:DGM-2/BSWML /TEND/01/23-24, Dated: 15.03.2024. (Serial Number 2)**

As per the above subject and reference, The Tender Notification invited under above reference and Tender No.01 serial No.02 is herewith cancelled due to certain Administrative and Technical reasons.

Sd/-
Deputy General Manager-2
BSWML

DIPR/CP/JA/112/2024-25